THE TYRANNY OF THE DARK

BY

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"THE CAPTAIN OF THE GRAY-HORSE TROOP"
"HESPER" "THE LIGHT OF THE STAR"
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"SHE CAME SLOWLY, WITH ONE SLIM HAND ON THE RAILING"

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Those in the Dark	WALDRON, *her father* MCLEOD, *her "control"* WALTIE, *her poltergeist* JENNIE PRATT, *Pratt's eldest daughter* MRS. PRATT, *"Loggy," and others dimly felt*

THE TYRANNY OF THE DARK

I

THE SETTING

THE village of Colorow is enclosed by a colossal amphitheatre of dove-gray stone, in whose niches wind-warped pines stand like spectators silent and waiting. Six thousand feet above the valley floor green and orange slopes run to the edges of perennial ice-fields, while farther away, and peering above these almost inaccessible defences, like tents of besieging Titans, rise three great mountains gleaming with snow and thunderous with storms. Altogether a stage worthy of some colossal drama rather than the calm slumber of a forgotten hamlet.

The railway enters the valley from the south by sinuously following the windings of a rushing, foam-white stream, and for many miles the engines cautiously feel their way among stupendous walls, passing haltingly over bridges hung perilously between perpendicular cliffs by slender iron rods, or creep like moun-

tain-cats from ledge to ledge, so that when they have reached safe harbor beside the little red depot they never fail to pant and wheeze like a tired, gratified dog beside his master's door. Aside from the coming and going of these trains, the town is silent as the regarding pines.

The only other ways of entrance to this deep pocket lie over threadlike trails which climb the divide from Silver City and Toltec and Vermilion, and loop their terrifying courses down the declivities trod only by the sturdy burro or the agile, sure-footed mountain-horse. These wavering paths, worn deep and dusty once, are grass-grown now, for they were built in the days when silver was accounted a precious metal, and only an occasional hunter or prospector makes present use of them.

Colorow itself, once a flaming, tumultuous centre of miners, gamblers, and social outcasts, is now risen (or declined) to the quiet of a New England summer resort, supported partly by two or three big mines (whose white ore is streaked with gold), but more and more by the growing fame of its mountains and their medicinal springs, for these splendid peaks have their waters, hot and cold and sweet and bitter, whose healing powers are becoming known to an ever-growing number of those Americans who are minded to explore their native land.

This centre of aërial storms, these groups of transcendent summits, would be more widely known still, but for the singular sense of proprietorship with which

each discoverer regards them. The lucky traveller who falls into this paradise is seized with a certain instant jealousy of it, and communicates his knowledge only to his family and his friends. Nevertheless, its fame spreads slowly, and each year new discoverers flock in growing numbers to the one little hotel and its ramshackle bath-house, so that the community once absolutely and viciously utilitarian begins to take timid account of its æsthetic surroundings, and here and there a little log-cabin (as appropriate to this land as the chalet to the Alps) is built beside the calling ripples of the river, while saddled horses, laden burros in long lines, and now and then a vast yellow or red ore-wagon creaking dolefully as it descends, still give evidence of the mining which goes on far up the zigzag trails towards the soaring, shining peaks of the Continental Divide.

II

THE MAID ON THE MOUNTAIN-SIDE

ONE day in July a fair young girl, with beautiful gray eyes, sat musingly beside one of these southern trails gazing upon the inverted pyramid of red sky which glowed between the sloping shoulders of the westward warding peaks. Her exquisite lips, scarlet as strawberry stains, were drawn into an expression of bitter constraint, and her brows were unnaturally knit. Her hat lay beside her on the ground, her brown hair was blowing free, and in her eyes was the look of one longing for the world beyond the hills. She appeared both lonely and desolate.

It was a pity to see one so young and so comely confronting with sad and sullen brow such aërial majesty as the evening presented. It was, indeed, a sort of impiety, and the girl seemed at last to feel this. Her frowning brow smoothed out, her lips grew more girlish of line, and at length, rapt with wonder, she fixed her eyes on a single purple cloud which was dissolving, becoming each moment smaller, more remote, like a fleeing eagle, yet burning each instant with even more dazzling flame of color than before—hasting as if to overtake the failing day. A dream of still fairer

lands, of conquest, and of love, swept over her—became mirrored in her face. She had at this moment the wistful gaze which comes to the eyes of the young when desire of the future is strong.

Upon her musings a small sound broke, so faint, so far, she could not tell from whence it came nor what its cause might be. It might have been the rattle of a pebble under the feet of a near-by squirrel or the scrambling rush of a distant bear. A few moments later the voice of a man—very diminished and yet unmistakable—came pulsing down the mountain-side.

The girl rose as lightly, as gracefully as a fawn who, roused but not affrighted, stands on her imprint in the grass and waits and listens.

The man or men—for another voice could now be heard in answer—came rapidly on, and soon a couple of men and a small pack-train came out of a clump of thick trees at the head of a gulch, and, doubling backward and forward, descended swiftly upon the girl, who stood, with some natural curiosity, to let the travellers, whoever they might be, pass and precede her down to the valley. She resented them, for the reason that they cut short her reverie, her moment of spiritual peace.

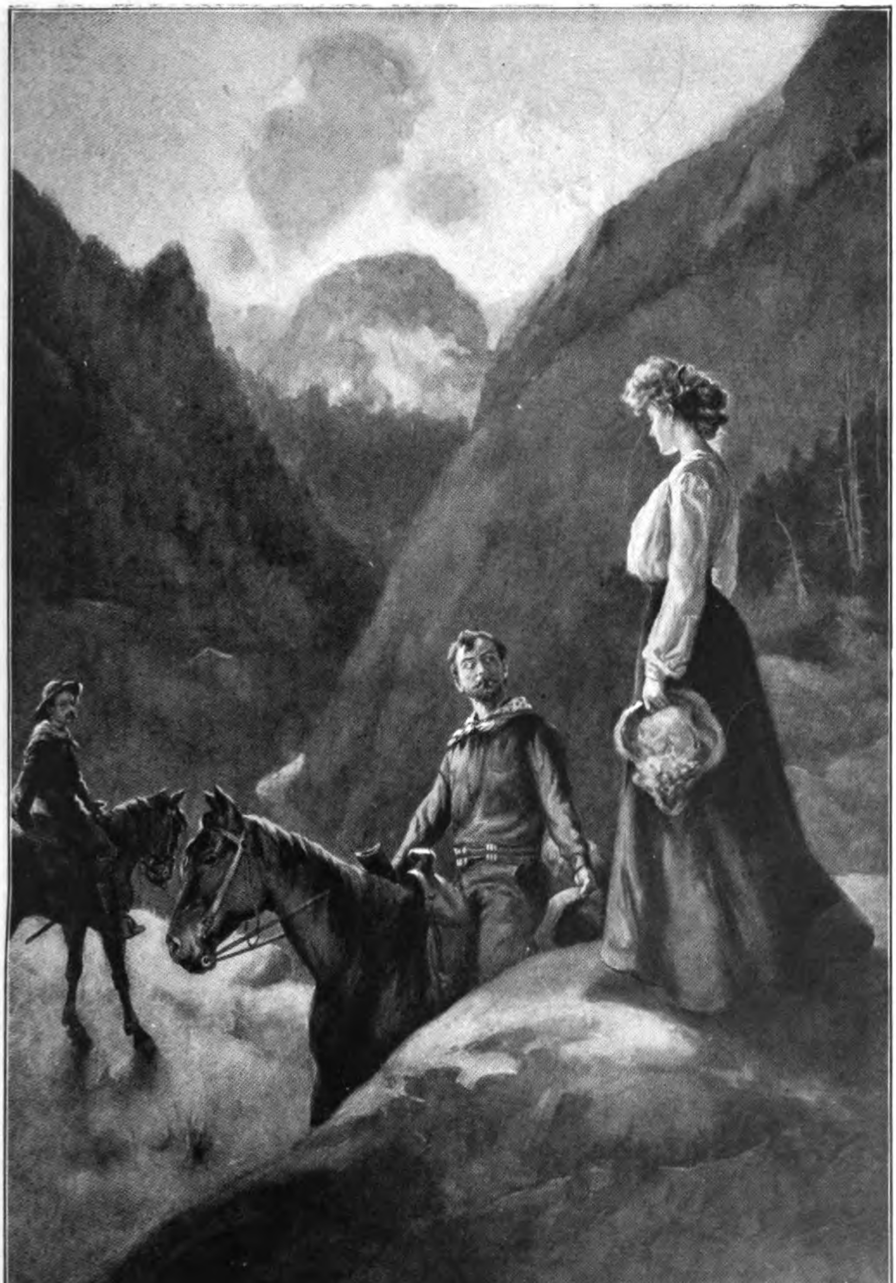
The man who first appeared was a familiar type of the West, a small, lean, sharp-featured, foxy-eyed mountaineer, riding gracefully yet wearily—the natural horseman and trailer. Behind him two tired horses, heaped with a camp outfit, stumbled, with low-hanging heads, while at the rear, sitting his saddle

sturdily rather than with grace, rode a young man bareheaded, but otherwise in the rough-and-ready dress of a plainsman. His eyes were on the sunset also, and something in the manner of his beard, as well as in the poise of his head, proclaimed him to be the master of the little train, a man of culture and an alien.

At sight of the girl he smiled and bowed with a look of frank and most respectful admiration, quite removed from the impudent stare of his guide. His hands were gloved, he wore a neat shirt, and his tie was in order—so much the girl saw as he faced her—and as he passed she apprehended something strong and manly in the lines of his back and shoulders. Plainly he was not to the saddle born, like the man ahead, and yet he was quite as bronzed and travel-worn.

A turn in the trail brought them both close under her feet, and again the man in the rear glanced up at the figure poised on the bowlder above him, and his eyes glowed once more with pleasure. There was in his look an expression of acknowledged kinship, as of one refined soul to another, a kind of subtle flattery which pleased while it puzzled the girl. Men with eyes of that appeal were not common in her world.

The bitter look vanished out of her face. She gazed after the trailer with the unabashed interest of a child, wondering who he might be. In that instant her soul, impressionable and eager, received and retained, like a sensitive plate, every line of his figure, every minute



"THERE WAS IN HIS LOOK AN EXPRESSION OF ACKNOWLEDGED KINSHIP"

modelling of his face—even his fashion of saddle and the leather of his gun-case remained with her as food for reflection, and as she loitered down the trail a wish to know more about him rose in her heart. There was a kind of smiling ecstasy on his face before he saw her—as if he, too, were transported by the scene, and this expression came at last to be the chief revelation of his character.

The red went out of the sky. The golden eagle of cloud flew home over the illimitable seas of saffron, the purple shadows rose in the valleys, the lights of the town began to sparkle. Engine-bells clanged to and fro, and the strains of a saloon band rose to vex the girl's poetic soul with repugnant remembrances of the dance-hall. "I suppose he is only camping through," she thought, a little wistfully, referring back to the stranger. "I wish I knew who he is."

As she came down to the level of the stream its friendly roar cut off the ribald music and the clamor of the engines precisely as the bank shut away the visible town, leaving the little row of pretty cottages in the ward of the mountains and the martial, ranked, and towering firs.

At the foot of the trail a gray-haired woman met her. It was her mother, disturbed, indignant. "Viola Lambert, what do you mean by staying up there after dark? I'm all a-tremble over you."

"It isn't dark, mother," answered the girl; "and if it were, it isn't the first time I've been out alone."

Mrs. Lambert's voice softened. "Child, I can

hardly see your face! You must not do such things. I don't mind your being out on horseback, but you must not go up there afoot. It is dangerous with all these tramp miners coming and going."

"Well, don't scold—I'm here safe and sound."

"I haven't had such a turn for years, Viola," the mother explained, as they walked side by side along the narrow walk. "I had an *impression*—so vivid—that I dropped my work and ran to find you. It was just as if you called me, asking for help. It seemed to me that some dreadful thing had happened to you."

"But nothing did. I went up to see the sunset. I didn't meet a soul." She ended abruptly, for she did not wish to retrace her sad reverie.

"Who were the two men who came down just now? They must have passed you."

"Yes, they passed me—I didn't know them. The one behind looked like an 'expert.' Perhaps he has come to examine the San Luis mine. Some one said they were expecting a man from England."

"He looked more like a Frenchman to me."

"It may be he is," answered Viola, restrainedly.

They turned in at a rustic gateway opening into the yard of a small and very pretty log-cabin which seemed a toy house, so minute was it in contrast to the mighty, fir-decked wall of gray and yellow rock behind it. Flowers had been planted along the path, and through the open door a red-shaded lamp shone like a poppy. Plainly it was the home of refined and tasteful women,

a place where tall, rude men entered timidly and with apologies.

"Was there any mail?" asked the girl, as she put aside her hat.

"Not a thing."

The shadow deepened on her small, sensitive face. "Oh, why *don't* the girls write? they should know how horribly lonely it is here. I'm tired of everything to-day, mother—perfectly stone-blue. I don't like what I am; I'm tired of church-work and the people here. I want to go back East; I want to change my life completely."

The mother, a handsome woman, with fresh, unlined face, made no reply to this outburst. "Gusta won't be back until late; we will have to get our own supper."

The girl seemed rather pleased at this opportunity to do something, and went to her work cheerfully, moving with such grace and lightness that the mother stood in doting admiration to watch her; she was so tall and lithe and full-bosomed—her one treasure.

As she worked, the shadow again lifted from the girl's face, a smile came back to her scarlet lips, and she sang underbreath as only a young maiden can sing to whom love is a wonder and marriage a far-off dream.

She recalled the look which lay on the face of the man who was riding with bared head in ecstasy of the scene above and below him; but, most of all, she dwelt upon the gracious and candid glance of admiration with

which he greeted her and which he repeated as he disappeared below her to be seen no more.

This look went with her to her room, and as she sat at her window, which opened upon the river, she wondered whether he had gone into camp in the pine groves just below the bridge, or whether he had taken lodgings at the hotel.

She had lovers—no girl of her charm could move without meeting the admiring glances of men; but this stranger's regard was so much more subtly exalting—it held an impersonal quality—it went beyond her entire understanding, adding an element of mystery to herself, to him, and to the sunset.

III

THE MAN

MEANWHILE the young tourist had alighted before the door of the principal hotel, and, after writing his name in a clear and precise hand on the book in the office, had hastened to his supper, carrying a most vivid recollection of the slender figure and flushed and speaking face of the girl on the trail. That moment of meeting, accidental and fleeting, had already become a most beautiful climax of his pilgrimage. "She was born of the sunset; she does not really exist," he said, with unwonted warmth of phrase. "How could this little mining town produce so exquisite a flower?"

His grosser needs supplied, he lit his big student's pipe and went out upon the upper story of the hotel's rude porch, and there sat, listening to the rush of the stream, while the great yellow stars appeared one by one above the lofty peaks, and the air grew crisp to frostiness. He was profoundly at peace with the world and himself, his physical weariness being just sufficient to give this hour a sound completeness of content.

As the beauty of the night deepened, the girl's

beauty allured like the moon. He still sought to explain her. "She is some traveller like myself," he said. "Bret Harte to the contrary, notwithstanding, the wilderness does not produce maids of her evident refinement and grace. She comes of a long line of well-bred people."

He was not an emotional person, and had not been permitted to consider pleasure the chief object, even of a vacation, but he went to his bed that night well pleased with Colorow, and with a half-defined sense that this was, after all, the point towards which his long journey, with all its windings, had really tended. However, he was not ready to acknowledge that a large part of the charm of the place was due to the glamour of a slender maid lit by the sunset light.

This delight in the town and its surroundings gained a new quality next morning as he looked from his window upon a single white cloud resting like a weary swan on the keen point of old Kanab. Though the mesas of New Mexico and the deserts of Arizona were his special field, he bared his head to the charm of "the high country."

Each summer, after months of prolonged peering into the hidden heart of microscopic things in his laboratory (he was both analytical chemist and biologist), it was his custom to return for a few weeks to huge, crude synthetic, nature for relief. After endless discussion of "whorls of force" and of "the office of germs in the human organism," he enjoyed the racy vernacular of the plainsman, to whom bacteria were

as indifferent as blackberry-seeds. Each year he resolved to go to the forest, to the lake regions, or to the mountains; but as the day of departure drew near the desert and the strange peoples living thereon reasserted their dominion, and so he had continued to return to the sand, to the home of the horned toad and the rattlesnake. These trips restored the sane balance of his mind. To camp in the chaparral, to explore the source of streams, and to relive the wonder of the boy kept his faculties alert and keen.

His love of the sands and the purple buttes of the plain did not blind him to the beauty of coloring and the gracious majesty of these peaks, clothed as they were with the russet and gold and amber of ripened grasses, which grew even to the very summits (only the kingliest of the peaks were permitted to wear the ermine robes which denoted sovereignty); the Continental Divide was, indeed, much more impressive than he had expected it to be.

He was not one of those who seek out strange women, and he had no hope of meeting the girl of the mountain-side again. He was content to have her remain a poem—a song of the sunset—a picture seen only for a moment, yet whose impression outlasts iron. Everything in nature had converged to make her momentous. His long stay among the ugly, dusky women of the desert, his exultant joy in the mountain sunset, and his abounding health (which filled his heart with the buoyancy of a boy)—all these causes combined to revive emotions which his absorption in

scientific investigation had set in the background—emotions which concern the common man, but which the deeply ambitious chemist, eager to discover the chemical molecular structure of the plasm, must put aside with a firm hand.

IV

A SECOND MEETING

VIOLA was just leaving her mother's gate the following afternoon when a man's voice, cordial, assured, and cultivated, startled her.

"Good-morning. Is this your home?"

She looked up to meet the smiling eyes of the stranger horseman. Again an indefinable charm of manner robbed his greeting of offence, and quite composedly she replied:

"Yes, this is our home."

"What a view you have, and what music!" He indicated the river which ran white and broad over its pebbles, just below the walk. "I am enchanted with the place. I think you must love it very much."

Her face expressed a qualified assent. "Oh yes, but I get tired of it sometimes, especially in winter when we are all shut in with snow."

"Then you really are a year-round resident? I suppose my view *is* the tourist's view. I can't believe anybody lives here in winter. I hope you won't mind my introducing myself"—he handed her a card. "You made such a pretty picture up there beside the trail yesterday that I couldn't forbear speaking to you on

a second meeting. I wanted to know whether you were real or just a fragment of sunset cloud."

The ease and candor of his manner, joined to the effect of the name on the card, fully reassured her, and she looked up with a smile. "Won't you come in and rest?"

"Thank you, I should like particularly to do so. I've been for a climb up that peak behind your cottage and I'm tired."

Her reserve quite melted, the girl led the way to the door where her mother stood in artless wonder.

"Mother, this is Dr. Serviss, of Corlear College."

"I'm glad to know you, sir," said Mrs. Lambert, with old-fashioned formality. "Won't you come in?"

"Thank you. It will be a pleasure."

"Are you a physician?" she asked, as she took his hat and stick.

"Oh, dear, no! Nothing so useful as that. I'm a doctor by brevet, as they say in the army." Then, as though acknowledging that his hostess was entitled to know a little more about her intrusive guest, he added: "I am a student of biology, Mrs. Lambert, and assistant to Dr. Weissmann, the head of the bacteriological department of Corlear Medical College. We study germs—microscopic 'bugs,'" he ended, with humorous glance at Viola. "What a charming bungalow you have here! Did you gather those wild flowers?"

Viola answered in the tone of a pupil to her master, "Yes, sir."

"But some of them grow high. You must be a mountaineer. Pardon my curiosity—it is inexcusable —but how long have you lived here?"

The mother looked at her daughter for confirmation. "Eight years."

"Of course you are from the East?"

"Yes, from Wisconsin."

He laughed. "*We* call Wisconsin a Western State. Of course, it's the ignorant prejudice of the New-Yorker, but I find it hard to think of you as actual residents of this far-away little town. I thought only miners lived here?"

"We are miners. My husband has a mine up in the Basin, but he's putting in some new machinery just now and is unable to come down but once a week." Then mildly resenting his implied criticism of the town, she added: "We have just as nice people here as you'll find anywhere."

He responded gallantly. "I am quite prepared to believe that, Mrs. Lambert. But do many nice people like you live here all the year round?" He was bent on drawing the girl out, but she did not respond.

The mother answered: "I haven't been away except to take my daughter East to school."

He was cautious. "By East you mean Milwaukee?"

"Diamond Lake, Wisconsin."

He turned to the girl. "How long were you away?"

"Four years."

"Did you like it?"

"Very much."

"That is the reason you find it lonesome here." Up to this moment his attitude was that of a teacher towards a pretty pupil. "You miss your classmates, I suppose? Still there must be diversions here, even for a young girl."

The mother sighed. "It really is very lonesome here for Viola—if it weren't for her church work and her music I don't know what she'd do. There are so few young people, and then her years at the seminary spoiled her for the society out here, anyway."

"So much the worse for Colorow society," laughed Serviss. Then, to clear the shadow which had gathered on the girl's face, he said: "I see a fine piano, and shelves of music books. This argues that you love music. Won't you sing for me? I am hungry for a song."

"I do not sing," she replied, coldly. "I have no voice."

"Then play for me. I have been for eight weeks on the desert and I am famishing for music."

"Are you a musician?" asked Mrs. Lambert.

"Oh no, only a music-lover."

"My daughter is passionately fond of the piano," the mother explained, "and her teachers advised her to go on and make a specialty of it. They recommended Boston, but Viola wants to go to New York. She wanted to go last year, but I couldn't let her go. I'd been without her for four years, and Mr. Lambert's affairs wouldn't permit us both to go, and so she had to stay; but it *does* seem too bad for one as gifted as she is to give it up."

At this moment Serviss changed his entire attitude towards these people. They were too genuine, too trustful, and too fine to permit of any patronization, and the girl's dignified silence and the charm of her pellucid eyes and rose-leaf lips quite transmuted him from the curious onlooker to the friend. "I can understand your dilemma," he said, with less of formal cheer and more of genuine sympathy. "And yet, if your daughter has most decided talent it is only fair to give her a chance to show what she can do."

The girl flushed and her eyes fell as the mother bent towards her visitor.

"I wish you would listen to her play, Dr. Serviss, and tell me what you think of her talent."

His eyes shone with humor. "I will listen with great pleasure; but don't ask a chemist to judge a pianist. I love music—it is a sweet noise in my ears—but I can hardly distinguish Chopin from Schumann." He faced the girl. "Play for me. I shall be very deeply indebted." As she still hesitated he added: "Please do, or I will certainly think you consider me intrusive."

As Viola slowly rose, Mrs. Lambert said: "You must not feel that way, Dr. Serviss. We are highly honored to entertain one so eminent as you are. I was brought up to value learning. Play for him, Viola."

"What is the reason for her reluctance?" Serviss asked himself. "Is it shyness? Or does she resent me?"

With a glance of protest at her mother the girl took her seat at the piano. "I will try," she said, bluntly. "But I know I shall fail."

Twice she laid her hands upon the keys only to snatch them away again as if they were white-hot metal, and Serviss fancied her cheek grew pale. The third time she clashed out a few jarring chords intermixed with quite astonishing roulade on the treble—an unaccountable interruption, as if a third hand had been thrust in to confuse her. She stopped, and he began to share her embarrassment.

She tried again, shaking her head determinedly from side to side as if to escape some invisible annoying object. It seemed as if some mocking sprite in the instrument were laboring to make her every harmony a discord, and Serviss keenly regretted his insistence.

Suddenly she sprang up with an impatient, choking cry. "I can't do it! He won't let me!" she passionately exclaimed, and rushed from the room leaving her visitor gazing with pity and amazement into the face of the mother, who seemed troubled but in no wise astounded by her daughter's hysterical action. She sat in silence—a painful silence, as if lacking words to express her thought; and Serviss rose, rebuked, and for the first time ill at ease.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Lambert; I didn't intend to embarrass your daughter."

"She is very nervous—"

"I understand. Being a complete stranger, I

should not have insisted. One of the best singers I ever knew was so morbidly shy that on the platform she was an absolute failure. Her vocal chords became so contracted that she sang quite out of tune, and yet among friends she was magnificent."

The mother's voice was quite calm. "It was not your fault, sir. Sometimes she's this way, even when her best friends ask her to play. That's why I fear she will never be able to perform in concerts—she is *liable* to these break-downs."

He was puzzled by something concealed in the mother's tone, and pained and deeply anxious to restore the peaceful charm of the home into which he had, in a sense, unbiddenly penetrated. "I am guilty—unpardonably guilty. I beg you to tell her that my request was something more than polite seeming—I was sincerely eager to hear her play. Perhaps at another time, when she has come to know me better, she will feel like trying again. I don't like to think that our acquaintance has ended thus—in discord. May I not come in again, now that I am, in a sense, explained?"

He blundered on from sentence to sentence, seeking to soften the stern, straight line on the mother's lips—a line of singular repression, sweet but firm.

"I wish you *would* come again. I should really like your advice about Viola's future. Can't you come in this evening?"

"I shall be very glad to do so. At what hour?"

"At eight. Perhaps she will be able to play for you then."

With a feeling of having blundered into a most unpleasant predicament, through a passing interest in a pretty girl, Serviss retreated to his hotel across the river.

V

PUPIL AND MASTER

ONCE out of the spell of the immediate presence of this troubled mother and her appealing daughter, Serviss began to doubt and to question. "They are almost too simple, too confiding. Why should Mrs. Lambert, at a first meeting, accidental and without explanation, ask me to take thought of her daughter's future?" The fact that his connection with an institution of learning gave him a sort of sanctity in their eyes did not weigh with him. He was of those who take professorships in the modern way—with levity, either real or assumed.

"I think, on the whole, I'd better keep out of this family complication, whatever it may be," he concluded. "This absence of the husband in the hills may be more significant than at present appears—it may be a voluntary sequestration. I take the hint. I am not seeking new responsibilities, and I don't care to act as adviser, even to a pretty girl—especially *not* to a pretty girl." And he waved his hand in the manner of one declining a doubtful cigar.

But this slim young witch, with the scarlet lips and pleading gray eyes, was not so easily banished. His

inward eye dwelt upon her with increasing joy. "How beautiful she was, as she stood there on that bowlder! Perhaps she was posing? She is now at the very height of her girlish charm. What an appeal she must make to the men of this region—those exquisite lips — that pliant waist — that full bosom! There is some antagonism between mother and daughter—something more than appears on the surface. She is both sullen and hysterical. What a pity!"

She continued to trouble him as he sat again after his evening meal on the veranda of the hotel. He could hear the slow tramp of heavy boots along the sidewalks beneath him, and the roar of the Colorow, softened by distance, rose and fell like a drowsy tune. On the highest peaks the after-glow still lingered, and from one of the little cottages deep in the shadow across the stream a light appeared like a signal, an invitation, and, the blood in him being young, accepted the lure. He rose with the impulse. "I'm going! Why not? 'Tis a night for adventure. There's no need of involving myself in any wise with their future. I'm an outsider, and will take precious good care to stay so." His face was impassive, but his heart was quick within him as he set foot on the bridge. "Perhaps this is my Rubicon?" he said, and paused with a moment's irresolution.

His doubt, his suspicion, instantly vanished as he reentered the pretty little sitting-room and faced the sweet-visaged mother, who tacitly acknowledged her daughter as the cause of his coming by saying:

"Viola has just stepped over to the parsonage. She will return in a moment. Won't you please be seated?"

Serviss took a chair, quite ready—even eager—to listen to the further confidences which he perceived his hostess was about to give him.

"I hope you won't think it strange, professor—"

He interrupted her. "Please don't call me professor."

"I beg your pardon, sir. I understood that you were a professor in a university."

She seemed disappointed, and he explained: "It's true I am in the hand-book as a member of the faculty, and I plead guilty to the degree of doctor of philosophy—*that* I am proud of; but to be called professor robs me of my young humanity." This humorous explanation seemed to confuse her, and he added, kindly and naturally: "Really, Mrs. Lambert, I am a chemist and experimentalist in biology. I have no class-room work, because the college prefers to have me make what they call 'original investigation.' And, pray, let me say that while I am very willing to assist your daughter, or to advise you in any way, I see very little of musical New York. My work confines me to my 'shop' very closely, and when I go out I associate almost wholly with my peculiar kind. However, I can easily secure information as to the best schools of music, for I have several friends who know all about it. I interrupted you—please continue."

This pleasant, straightforward speech restored her confidence. "I think I was about to say, sir, that it may seem strange to you that I should so suddenly ask your advice, but, you see—"

"Oh, not at all," he genially interrupted. "I am consulted on all kinds of matters; in fact, I pass for a real doctor—out on the trail. I carry a little medicine-case for emergencies, and I assume all the authority of the regular practitioner—on occasion. I shall be very sorry if my distaste for the title 'professor' leads you to think me unsympathetic. I shall be very glad to assist you in any way."

"Thank you. You see, I was brought up to esteem learning, and we seldom meet one of your eminence—we are so completely out of the world here—it is a great pleasure to us—"

Footsteps just outside of the screen-door announced the return of the girl, who entered composedly, followed by a young man. Her manner was cold, her glance aloof, as she greeted Serviss.

"I'm glad you came," she said. "I was afraid you would forget us." She turned towards her escort, who had halted in the doorway. "Professor Serviss, this is the Reverend Mr. Clarke, the pastor of our church."

As Serviss shook hands with the Reverend Clarke he experienced a distinct shock of repulsion—an unaccountable feeling, for the clergyman was decidedly handsome, at first sight. But his hand was cold, his face pallid, and a bitter line, the worn pathway of a sneer, curved at one corner of his mouth. "Unwhole-

some, anæmic," was Serviss's inward comment as he turned away to address the girl, whose change of manner exerted a new witchery over him.

She was dressed in black for some reason, and her face seemed both sad and morose, but the graceful dignity of her strong young body was enhanced by her dark gown. Her hands, her feet, were shapely, without being dainty. "Plainly these women come of good stock, no matter what the husband and father may be," Serviss thought. He resented the clergyman's intrusive presence more and more. "Is he brought in as a safeguard?" he asked himself.

Mr. Clarke's attitude was certainly forbidding. He perched in grim, expectant silence on the edge of his chair, waiting, watching. His lean face had the blue-white look of the much-shaven actor, and his manner was as portentous as that of a tragedian.

"What the devil does he mean by staring at me like that?" Serviss continued to ask himself. "Does he expect me to go off like a bomb?"

He had started a discussion of the weather or some other harmless topic, when Clarke began, in a deep voice, with the formal inflections of the parson: "Miss Lambert tells me you are from Corlear University, professor?"

Serviss groaned and threw up his hands with a comical gesture. "Well, let it go at that. I suppose it explains me to call me 'professor.' Yes, I have a connection there—I draw a salary from the institution."

The clergyman regarded him soberly, as did the women, without sharing his humor in the least. Evidently being a professor in a university was no light thing to a Western preacher. "She tells me you have proposed to act as her adviser—"

Again Serviss protested. "Oh, nothing so formidable as that, my dear sir. I have promised to make inquiries for her." Then, obscurely moved to create a better impression in the girl's mind, he added: "I shall be very happy, of course, to do all that is in my power to aid you, Miss Lambert, but, as I have just been saying to your mother, I can only act through my friends. Nobody enjoys music more than I, but no one can possibly know less about it. In these days of specialization one is forced to one's own little groove in order to achieve practical results. General culture is impossible to specially trained sharps like myself."

"What *is* your specialty, may I ask?" inquired Clarke, remotely.

"I usually answer 'bugs,' but when I wish to be quite understood I explain that I am a physiological chemist and biologist. At the present moment I am assistant in the pathological department of the Corlear Medical College."

The preacher seemed to lighten a little. "Ah! that is a noble study, a study of incalculable service to mankind. I am deeply interested in that line of thought myself—I may say *vitally* interested, for I suffer from lung trouble. One by one the germs of disease are being discovered and their antitoxins catalogued." It

was evident that he was anxious to impress the women with his wonderful understanding of the scientist's work and aims.

His tone was so sententious that Serviss instantly became flippant, as an offset. "Yes, one by one we round 'em up! But don't think me unfriendly to the 'beasts.' They have their uses. I'd no sooner kill a bacterium than a song-bird. I think we care too highly for the cancerous and the consumptive. I'm not at all sure that humanity oughtn't to be hackled like weeds, and so toughen its hold on life. Germs may be blessings in disguise."

Clarke pursued his way. "How little we know about their reactions—their secretions. You've given some attention to the X-ray and its effect on these cells, I presume?"

Serviss inwardly grinned to think what Weissmann would say at sight of his assistant sitting in solemn discussion of the germs and X-rays with a village clergyman and two reverential women. "Why, yes, I've considered it. Naturally, any new thing that bears on my specialty makes me sit up. I've even done a little experimenting with it."

"But have you considered the bearing of all these subtleties of science upon"—he hesitated—"a—upon certain—a—occult phenomena?"

Serviss eyed him non-committally. "Well, what, for instance?"

"Well, upon, say, telepathy—and—a—well, upon spiritual healing—and the like."

"I can't say that I have; I don't exactly see the connection. Furthermore, I don't believe in these particular delusions. My work concerns the material facts of life, not the dying superstitions of the race. I have no patience with any morbid theory of life."

This remark plainly produced a sensation. The preacher cast a significant glance at the mother, and the girl looked away at the lamp, a flush upon her face.

"Hello!" exclaimed Serviss, under his breath. "Have I discovered a nest of cranks? I've been enlisted on somebody's side—I wonder whose?"

The clergyman faced him again and calmly asked: "Have you ever *investigated* these occult phenomena?"

"Certainly not. I have no time to waste on such imaginings. My time is all taken in a study of certain definite processes in the living organism."

A light began to glow in the eyes of the young clergyman. "I suppose you class mental healing among the delusions?"

"Most assuredly I do," answered Serviss, with the remorselessness of youth.

"You would say that the mind of man cannot mend the body of another—"

"If you mean directly—in the manner of 'faith cures' and the like — I would answer certainly not, unless the disorder happens to be in itself due to a delusion. I can imagine the hypochondriac being cured by mental stimulus." He felt that he was draw-

ing near the point at issue, and his eyes shone with glee.

The preacher set his trap. "You believe in the action of a drug—say, prussic acid—you believe it will kill?"

"Yes, and quite irrespective of the opinion of the one who takes it. His thinking it water will not check or change its action in the slightest degree."

"But *how* does it kill?" persisted Clarke. "What does it *do?*"

"If you mean why, at the last analysis, does one drug attack cells and the other nourish them, I answer, frankly, I don't know—nobody knows."

Clarke pursued his point. "Under the microscope, the germ of, say, tetanus is a minute bar with spore at the end like the head of a tadpole. Of what is this cell composed?"

"Probably of a jelly-like substance with excessively minute filaments, but we don't know. We are at the limit of the microscope. We trace certain processes, we even dissect certain cells, but elemental composition of plasm remains a mystery."

The preacher glowed with triumph. "Then you confess yourself baffled? The union of matter and spirit is beyond your microscope. What do you know about a drop of water? You say it is formed of hydrogen and oxygen in such and such proportions. What *is* hydrogen? Why do they unite?"

"I don't know," calmly replied Serviss. "We admit that any material substance remains inexplicable.

The molecule lies far below the line of visibility. We only push the zone of the known a little farther into the realm of the unknown; but how does that serve your argument?"

"By demonstrating that the mind of a man is simply the mastering mystery in a world of mysteries, and that there is no known limit to what it may do. We say that at the point where life enters to differentiate the germ is beyond science—there of necessity faith is born."

"You say 'we'—are you an apostle of 'the new church'?" asked Serviss, abruptly.

The preacher visibly shrank. "I do not care to announce my growing conviction to my congregation, at present; but I find many things about the doctrine which appeal to me. Some form of spiritism is the coming religion—in my judgment. The old order changeth. The traditional theology—the very faith I preach—has become too gross, too materialistic, for this age; some sweeter and more mystic faith is to follow. Even science is prophesying new power for man, new realms for the spirit. You men of science pretend to lead, but you are laggards. You pore upon the culture of germs, but shut your eyes to the most vital of all truths. Is the life beyond the grave of less account than the habits of animalculæ?"

The young scientist listened to this query with outward courtesy, but inwardly his gorge rose. "I see one gain in your new position," he answered, lightly. "Matter is no longer the dead, inorganic, 'godless

thing' which the old-time theologians declared it to be. Matter, so far from being some inert lump, is permeated with life—is life itself. So far as we now know, all the visible and tangible universe is resolvable into terms of force—that is to say, chemical process. There may be no line of demarcation between the organic and the inorganic."

"And yet with your knowledge of the inscrutable final mystery of matter you set a mark at the grave! You condemn all manifestation of the spirit, all the phenomena of spiritism, for example?"

"Condemn is not the word—we simply say the phenomena are absurd, the spirit cannot exist without the body—"

"Have you ever investigated a single form of spirit manifestation? Have you studied the claims of those who are in touch with the spirit world?"

"No."

The preacher's sneer broke forth. "I can't see but you scientists are quite as dogmatic, quite as bigoted as the theologians."

Serviss laughed. "It does look a little that way. However, I'm not as uninformed as I seem. It happens that I am in close personal contact with men whose specialty is the study of morbid psychology, and I know the quality of those who act as mediums for the return of the dead." The intensity of the interest on the part of the little group before him was astonishing, not to say appalling. "It is evident that the mother and her pastor are both of the new dis-

pensation or worse," was his thought, but his natural courtesy led him to say, placably: "There are mysteries in the world, I admit—in chemistry as in biology—but they seem to me to be different in very essence from the 'mysteries' of spiritualism and all allied 'psychic phenomena,' which appear to me essentially absurd, ignoble—'ratty,' to use a slang phrase—a faith founded upon things done in the dark, always in the dark."

The preacher flamed out at this. "I knew you would get round to that; that is the reason why I began by drawing you out on the X-ray. How little do we know of motion! The X-ray moves in straight lines, I understand, while light has a wave motion. Hence they are antagonistic. May it not be that the spirits of those gone before manifest by means of an unknown force which light neutralizes? May this not be the explanation why the phenomena of the spirit world require darkness?"

"It may," answered Serviss, dryly; "but there is a far easier explanation— But, see here," he returned to his boyish humor, "this is my vacation. I came out here to escape 'shop,' and here we are wasting time on X-rays and spiritism, and boring our patient hostess besides. Miss Lambert, won't you play for us and clear the air of our controversial dust?"

The girl, who had been sitting during this conversation in rigid immobility, intent on every word, now turned towards Clarke as if asking his consent. The mother, too, seemed to wait anxiously for the minister's

answer, as if wondering whether he would willingly cut short his interrogation.

His eyes were still glowing with the heat of controversy, but he gravely said: "I hope you will give me another opportunity to discuss this matter. It is very important to me."

"Certainly, with pleasure," answered Serviss, glad to rid himself of the discussion of the moment.

As Viola stood slowly turning the leaves of her music, three loud knocks sounded upon the inner door, as if an insistent neighbor had entered and signalled for help. The mother rose and went out hurriedly, but the clergyman merely glanced after her, and said to the girl:

"You would better play, Viola."

The girl dashed into a stormy Polish march, which she played very well, but with a mechanical precision which seemed to offend Clarke, who rose and laid his hand on her arm. "Wait, you're not in the mood yet." He turned to Serviss. "The spirit of our discussion is upon her. She is very sensitive to such things. I will sing first—if you don't object," he added, in a new tone, a touch of apology in his voice, and he gave out the effect of addressing an unseen auditor—some one in the inner room.

"I shall be delighted," replied Serviss, with formal politeness, though he began to apprehend something morbidly forbidding in the minister and in his influence on the girl. An extraordinary intimacy was revealed, not so much in the words he spoke as in the tones he used. "Here is the girl's lover," he decided.

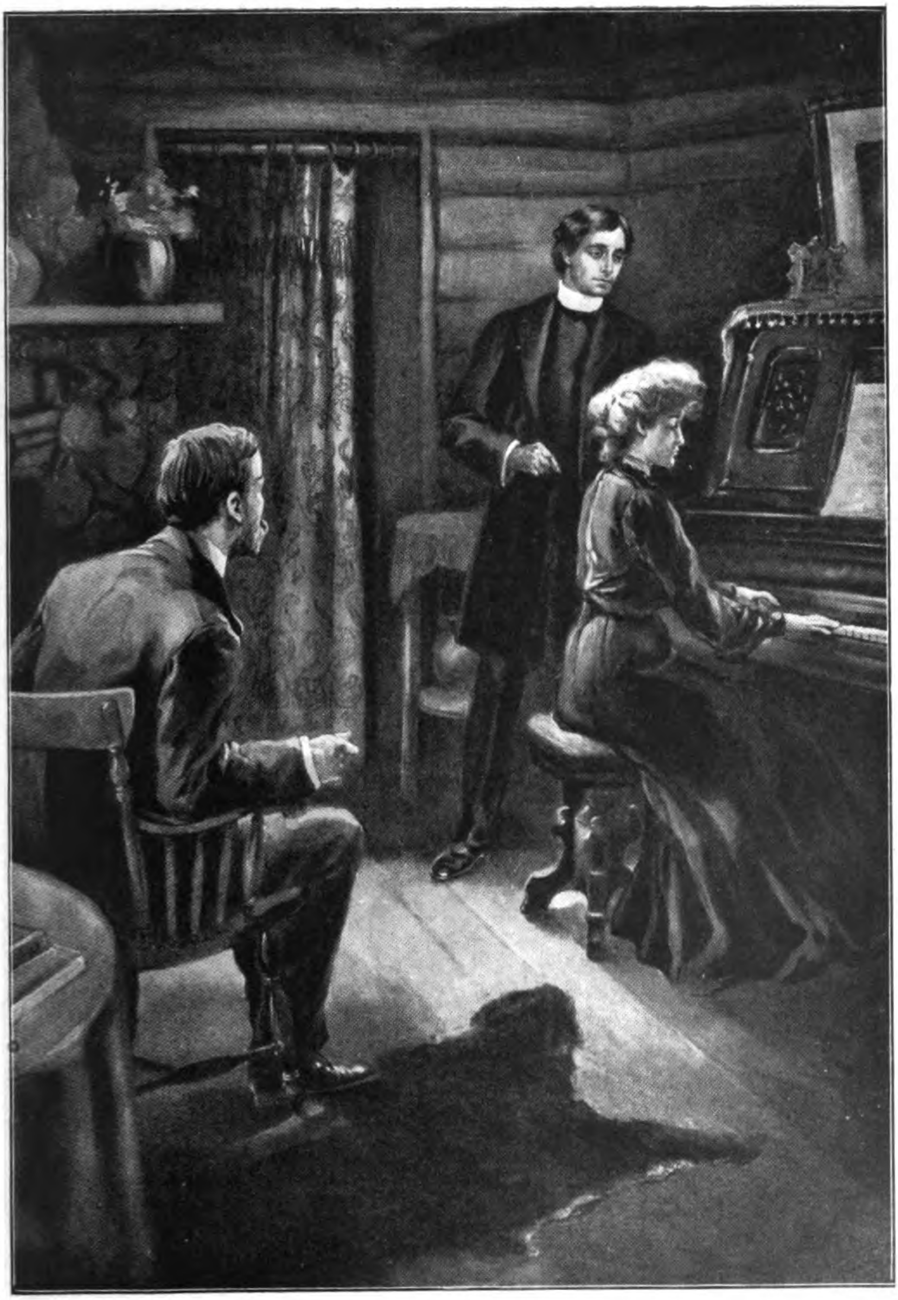
There was no timidity or hesitation in Viola's manner as she struck the first chords of an old ballad, and Clarke, transformed by a new and lofty mood, sang, with notable beauty of phrasing, "The Banks o' Ben Lomond." Something in the melancholy of the lover's cry seemed to fit with this singular young preacher's mood. His voice searched the heart, his eyes misted with feeling, and when he finished Serviss applauded most fervently, "Bravo!" and impulsively offered his hand.

"My dear fellow, you have a wonderful voice. *You* are the one to go to New York; you'd make Carolus look to his laurels. Sing something else—something of Strauss. Do you know Strauss?"

Clarke smiled with wistful sadness. "I sing very few ballads. My voice was given me to use in Christ's service, not for the gratification of my pride."

Serviss recoiled before this sanctimonious speech, and the light went out of his face. A disgust which he could not entirely conceal crossed his lips. "My dear sir, you can't serve the Lord better than by singing beautiful songs to the weary people of this earth. To wear out a voice like that on pinchbeck hymn tunes is a crime." Then, as if becoming conscious of a neglect of the girl, he added: "Now that you are in the mood, Miss Lambert, you must try that sonata again."

The girl seemed not to be offended by his enthusiasm over the minister's singing, and with a word in a low voice to Clarke, who placed a sheet of music before



"SERVISS LISTENED WITH GROWING AMAZEMENT"

her, she began to play, opening the composition with unexpected breadth and dignity of phrasing. Serviss listened with growing amazement. Her hands were not large, but they had ample spread and were under perfect control. There was power in the poise of her head and in the rhythmic swaying of her body, but her playing was curiously unfeminine. There was no touch of girlish grace, of sentiment, in her performance, and with a sudden enlightenment Serviss inwardly exclaimed: "Aha! A clerical Svengali! This musical preacher has trained his pupil till she plays as *he* would play if he had the digital facility. It's all fine, but it is not the girl," and the question of their relationship again engaged him.

When the final stormy note was still, Viola remained on her stool, as though waiting for her critic to applaud.

Serviss broke the silence by exclaiming: "See here, you people are making game of me. You are both professionals in disguise. Come now, 'fess up," he challenged Clarke. "You are Señor Del Corte, barytone of the Salt-Air Opera Company; and you, Miss Lambert, belong to the Arion Ladies' Orchestra. I have found you both out!"

The girl smiled with pleasure, but Clarke remained so unassailably serious that Serviss was moved to further deeps of audacity. "Don't tell me you are a comedian, also! You certainly have me guessing. Who are you, really?"

Clarke answered, resentfully: "I am the pastor of

the Presbyterian church in this village, as Miss Lambert has told you, and she is my organist."

Again that thump three times repeated sounded upon the door. Serviss, baffled and silenced by Clarke's impenetrable gravity, and by something inexplicably submissive, yet watchful, in the face of the girl, felt himself confronted by an intangible, sinister, and inescapable influence. The young clergyman seemed to darken and oppress both women. It was as if they were all leagued in a conspiracy to deceive and cajole. This bewilderment lasted but a moment, and he rose from his chair with a spring. "Well, now, play something else—give us a bit of rag-time; that last piece has left us all a little dashed—try a cake-walk."

Clarke interposed. "Miss Lambert does not play those trashy melodies. I consider them essentially irreligious."

Serviss resented the preacher's tone, but quickly answered: "They're not exactly reverent, I'll admit; but without them American music would be but a poor reflection of the German."

As if to save his reputation the preacher sang "The Palms," and sang it magnificently; and the girl accompanied him with such accuracy and good judgment that Serviss was able to infer long hours of practice, and this did not please him.

"His influence on her and on this household is not good," he decided. "That chap is decidedly morbid. If he is married, so much the worse. He's far too

handsome to be a safe guide to an impressionable young girl. There is some mystery here," and he recalled that Viola's face was troubled when first he saw it. And at the close of this song, without a glance at the preacher, he offered a parting hand to Viola. "If I can be of any aid in putting you in touch with a teacher in New York, please write me. I think you have my card. You play with astonishing power and brilliancy. You would certainly interest a man like Greer."

Her face flamed with color—all her sullen restraint vanished, all her girlish charm came back. "Oh, do you think so? Do you suppose I could get him to teach me?"

"I don't say that—he is a very busy man—but I think you are decidedly to be encouraged. But I may be able to hear you again before I go. I want to hear you play alone."

"I wish you would come again." There was a subtle entreaty in her voice, almost a prayer; and in her uplifted face was expressed the respect and confidence of a child. His heart was moved with pity as well as with admiration, and, turning to the mother, he added: "I shall probably remain over Sunday, and it would be a pleasure if I might come again to your pretty home."

Mrs. Lambert's face glowed with pleasure. "It will be a great honor to have you, sir."

In this spirit he went away, without again taking Clarke's hand, with a last glance at the girl's face as

she stood at the open door to let him pass. He turned from the gate with a sense of having been permitted a glance into the very heart of a secret drama which might at any moment become a tragedy. His interest was profoundly stirred, his sympathies wholly enlisted in behalf of this girl, so young and so aspiring.

As he stood above the roaring water he formulated a theory with regard to the relationship of the personalities he had just left behind him. "The girl is being persecuted by this man Clarke, who is madly in love with her. She has an inner repugnance to him; but he is a clergyman, and that means a great deal to a girl in the adoration stage. Her mother, a nice, religious sort of person, favors the preacher, of course; but the father probably despises him. Clarke is evidently losing his hold on the rock-ballasted keel of his creed, and in his shipwreck he may carry that girl down with him; such cases are all too common. If he is married, he is all the more dangerous. But it is not my duty to interfere." He ended, resolute to put the whole problem from him: "The girl has legal guardians—on them rests the blame if she is corrupted. To reform this world has never been my call."

But he could not rid himself of a growing sense of responsibility. His mind returned again and again to the complication into which he had suddenly been thrust. "Perhaps this desire on the part of the girl to go away to study is only an instinctive desire to escape. It would be like that preacher to have a worn,

little, commonplace wife. What can Lambert be thinking of to let such a man come into his home and direct the daily life of both his wife and daughter? He is neglecting his plain duty."

He fell asleep, fancying himself on the way up the trail to the mine, and when he woke to find the good, rectifying rays of the morning sun filling his room the theories of the night were absurd. He desired to see the girl again, not to warn her of her peril, but because she was piquant and lovely, as befitted her romantic surroundings.

VI

IN THE MARSHALL BASIN

IT must have been about eleven o'clock next morning when Serviss rode up and dismounted at the Lambert gate, and in the flaming light of mid-day the sense of mystification, the feeling that the girl was in the coils of some invisible menace, had entirely vanished. The preacher had sunk to the rôle of a conceited clerical ass who regarded science as an enemy to his especial theories and the visible universe as an outlying province of Calvinism; while Viola, who came to the door, was again most humanly charming, delighting his eyes like the morning.

She smiled blithely and spoke collectedly, in response to his greeting; but when he asked her to be his guide to the wonders of the region her face clouded in dismay.

"Oh, I'm sorry; I wish I could; but I must carry a message up to my father at the mine."

"Very well, why not take me? I infer you go on horseback?"

She hesitated. "Yes, but it's a long, hard ride—and you said you were tired of the saddle."

"I was yesterday; but I feel quite rested now.

By all means let me accompany you. I should particularly enjoy mounting high to-day. I should also like to meet your father."

"Very well, I will speak to mother," she replied, with shining face, and disappeared within.

The mother, mindful of Serviss's connection with a great university, made no objection to the plan. On the contrary, she was pleased and flattered by his interest in her daughter, and a few moments later the young people rode off up the mountain road side by side and in high spirits.

Serviss winced at times at the childish flatness of Viola's comment, but her voice was musical and her face flower-like — therefore he forgave her. With all his knowledge of the constitution of matter, he was still young and in the mating mood.

They talked of the flowers, of the trails, of the birds to be found on the heights for a time; but soon, inevitably, they came to talk of themselves. Under his questioning she outlined her plans for a musical education, and this led at last to a consideration of the Reverend Mr. Clarke.

At the first mention of his name the girl's face distinctly darkened and her answers became curiously studied, almost evasive—or so it seemed to Serviss.

"Yes, I play in his church," she said, "and he teaches me. He is a splendid musician—don't you think so? I owe a great deal to him. He has helped me so much—especially in my phrasing. He is a wonderful man. We are fortunate in having him with us."

"He struck me as a little morbid, not to say morose. Has he had trouble in his church?"

Her answer was deep-toned and affectedly solemn in one so young. "No, but his wife passed out last year."

"Passed out? What do you mean by that?"

"I mean she died."

"Oh, I see!" His inflection checked her confidence, and they rode for a little way in silence.

Serviss was thinking. The situation is now clear. Clarke is working upon this sweet and charming girl in order to have her take the place of his dead wife. A sorrowful thing to think of, but not so bad as I have been imagining. At length he asked: "What else can you tell me about this Mr. Clarke? Is he a native of the West?"

"Oh no, he is from the East. He had a big church in Brooklyn; but his health gave out and he was forced to leave it. He came here for the baths and the air. He is much better now."

"He retains all his intellectual diseases, however. What medicine will he find for those?" Meeting the girl's startled glance, he hastened to add: "I beg your pardon, I was just wondering if he were as morbid when he came as he now seems."

"Oh no! He was quite cheerful till his wife went away. That changed him greatly. For months he hardly left his study. He reads too much even now. That is why he looks so pale. His house is packed with books."

"He seems in need of fresh air. How does your father get on with him?"

"Not at all well."

"I inferred that. Your father is a man of deeds—of open air—I take it."

"Mr. Lambert isn't my own father," she took this opportunity to explain. "My own father passed to the other side when I was eleven."

"Pardon my curiosity, Miss Lambert, but you've used a phrase once or twice which I've heard the people of a certain faith use. Is your mother a spiritualist?"

She looked at him with timid eyes, then turned quickly away. "She—she used to be; she's studying theosophy now."

"And the minister is trying to convert you all to his especial theory! I can imagine his discourses. No wonder you want to flee."

The girl's whole face, voice, and manner changed—became bitter, passionate. "Oh, I hate it! I hate it! I want to be free of it all!"

The intensity of her utterance amazed Serviss, and he studied her profile in silence before he answered. "I think I know what you mean, and I sympathize with you. "You're too young to be troubled by the doubts and dismays of men like Clarke. He is preposterous in the face of a landscape like this. Let us forget him and his 'isms.'" With these words he straightened in his saddle and lifted his eyes towards the height before them. "Isn't that superb!"

They were drawing near the great gray boundary-

wall of the valley, and the sound of roaring water grew tumultuous as they rounded the curve in the road and came into the little triangular nook which had been anciently formed by the Colorow as it descended in power from its source in the high parks. On the left the ledges rose almost sheer for a thousand feet, and from the edge of this cliff ore-buckets, a-slide on invisible cables, appeared in the sky, swooping like eagles, silently dropping one by one, to disappear, tamely as doves, in the gable end of a huge, drab-colored mill which stood upon the flat beside the stream. Beyond the mill Mount Ignacio rose darkly purple, hooded in white clouds.

The entire scene was typical of the West, of its energy, its greed, and its faith. Here was life—life and buoyant health — and the blood of the young scientist quickened as he comprehended the daring, the originality of the miner's plan.

"Is this your father's enterprise?" he asked, in the hope of an affirmative answer. A man of this quality would hang the minister if necessary.

"Oh no. We've got to climb the hill and cross the upper Basin before we reach our mine. This is the ore from the San Luis tunnel."

She was, happily, of the sunny world now, and, with a gay smile, turned her horse into a narrow trail and called back to him: "We climb here." He followed, admiring the strength and grace of her rounded figure as her horse zigzagged up the steep acclivity. She was troubled by no problems at this moment. She

was rather a daughter of the mountains, a sister to the eagles.

She stopped once or twice to permit him to locate the far-famed peaks rising one by one to the south of them, and the third time she drew rein he was a-foot, and she said, "We're almost to the top of this grade; it's easier in the Basin."

"I am thinking only of my horse," he answered. "You see, he is carrying a forty-pound saddle, and is not so fresh as yours. I'm sorry to delay you."

The Basin was a most glorious valley, bowl-shaped, green with grass and groves of aspen and fir, and flooded with a cataract of sunshine. All about it ran a rim of lofty summits, purple in shadow, garnet and gold and green in the sun. Here and there a prospect-hole showed like a scar, or a gray, dismantled stamp-mill stood like a disintegrating bowlder beside its yellow-gray dump of useless ore. Serviss, familiar with the rise and fall of the silver-miner, looked over the lovely valley with a certain sense of satisfaction, for he was able to reconstruct its beauty before that flood of devastating humankind swept up from the eastern plain. "Nature is reasserting her dominion," he said, aloud. "Mining is a wounding business—like murder."

The girl glanced away to the south. "We'll have to hurry if we reach camp by one o'clock," she called, and he waved his hand as a sign of surrender to her leadership.

They overtook a long train of burros bearing a most

miscellaneous cargo of odds and ends of machinery, nail-kegs, iron-rods, bundles of bolts, lumber, oil, and boxes of groceries.

"This is all father's—all for the new mill," said the girl, nodding and smiling at the Mexicans in charge of the donkeys. "Hello, Clint!" she called, cheerily, to another muleteer, a little farther up the trail, a brown, good-looking young fellow, who saluted her joyfully, his eyes aglow with adoration.

"Every man is her suitor," thought Serviss, with a twinge of disapproval. "Think what she must seem to that leather-colored Arab urging forward those donkeys!" And a knowledge of her danger—he put it that way—began to oppress him. "She is too fine and sweet to marry among these rough miners."

She, it seemed, was not afraid of mountaineers, for she had a gay nod and a bright word for every one she met, though some of them were brutal-mouthed and grimy and sullen. Serviss derived no comfort from the fact that the most sinister of them brightened for an instant in the light of her adorable smile.

At last, far ahead, they came in sight of the mill on a bare peak. The white clouds which had been silently gathering round the great domes swiftly overspread the whole sky. The air grew chill as November. The wind began to roar in the firs with a stern mournfulness which went to the heart of the man; but the girl, without once stopping her horse, unrolled her rain-coat and put it on, calling back at her cavalier as she did so with a fine, challenging, gleeful shout.

They were very high now. Perennial ice lay in the gullies and on the north side of the cliffs, and the air was light and keen. Suddenly the wind died away. A gray hush came over the valley. The water in the streams lost its vivid green and became lead-color streaked with white foam. One by one the mountains were blotted out by the storm. The world of sky and rocks grew mysterious, menacing; but the girl pushed fearlessly forward, singing like a robin, while the rain slashed over her, and the thunder boomed and re-echoed from crag to crag like warning guns in magnificent alarums. "I love this!" she cried, her clear voice piercing the veil of water like a flute note. "Don't you?"

Serviss was not without imagination, and the contrast of this jocund, fearless, free young maid with the silent, constrained girl of the night before moved him to wonder. "Here she is herself—nature's own child," he thought. "Last night she was a 'subject'—a plaything of the preacher's. Strange the mother does not realize her daughter's danger."

The storm passed as quickly as it came, and when they drew rein at the mine the sun was shining. The mill, standing on a smooth, steep slope, and sheltered on the north by a group of low firs, seemed half a ruin, but was, in fact, being rebuilt and enlarged. All about it were dumps of clay, slippery with water, and rough bunk-houses and ore-sheds. All the structures were rude, masculine, utilitarian, and the girl grew each moment in delicacy and refinement by contrast.

In answer to her halloo a plainly clad man came to the door, his face set in amazement.

"Why—see here—daughter! I wasn't looking for you to-day."

"I'm here just the same," she laughingly replied. "Here are some telegrams. Professor Serviss, this is my father."

Joseph Lambert was a small man, with shy, blue eyes and a low and gentle utterance. He carried his head leaning a little to the left and seemed a shade discouraged, almost melancholy. He was, however, a brave, silent, tireless little man, who had made one great fortune in silver-mines only to lose it in the panic. He was now cannily working a vein which had a streak of gold in it, and, like all miners, was just on the point of making a "strike." He was distracted with work, and, though cordial, could not at the moment give much time to his visitor.

"Well, now, Viola, you take Professor Serviss into the cook-house and feed him. I guess you'll find something left over. If not, you will have to scratch up something."

Viola thereupon led the way into the kitchen, greeting each man she met, cooks and waiters alike, with impartial, clear-eyed joyousness and trust, and when the food came on she ate without grimace or hesitation. The cook, a big, self-contained Chinaman, came in with a china cup.

"Use this klup—tin klup no good for lady." His voice was gruff and his manner that of one who com-

pels a child to use a napkin; but it was plain he adored her. As she thanked him he shuffled away with an irrepressible grin.

All this produced in Serviss an uneasiness. To him she was a lamb venturing among wolves. "She should not expose herself to the coarse comment, the seeking eyes of these fellows," he indignantly commented, blaming the acquiescent mother and the absent-minded step-father. "This childlike trust is charming, but it is not war."

Her essential weakness of defence, her innocence, began to move him deeply, dangerously. He began to understand how she had turned to Clarke for companionship, not merely because he was a clergyman, but because he was a young man of more than usual culture and attainment, whose sympathy and counsel promised aid and comfort in her loneliness. "She does not love him; she merely admires certain sides of his character; she fears to marry him, and quite properly. His morbid faith would destroy her."

As they were returning to the office they met the young driver of the mule-train, and Viola introduced him as "Mr. Ward, of Boston."

He was tall and spare, with a fine, sensitive, boyish face—a face of refinement which his rough, gray shirt, faded leggings, and badly battered hat belied.

"Mr. Ward is out here for his health, also," Viola explained. "All the really nice people are 'one-lungers.'"

"Isn't it sad?" said Ward, gravely. "However,

Miss Lambert is only partly right. I made my health an excuse. I'm here because I like it."

Serviss bent a keen look upon him. "You don't look as if you had ever been sick."

"I'm not. I came out here to escape college—and my father's business." He laughed. "But don't betray me. I'm supposed to be 'slowly improving.'"

There was something fine and hawklike in the young fellow's profile as he stood negligently leaning on the door-frame, his eyes on the flushed face of the girl; and Serviss experienced another pang of jealous pain—they were so young, so comely, so full of the fire and imagination of youth. At the moment his own fame and special tasks were of small account.

Upon their return to the office Lambert met them in the same absent-minded, apologetic way. "I'm just getting some new machinery into place and haven't a minute, but you must make yourself as much at home as you can. Viola will show you around."

Serviss protested that he needed no entertainment, that he was not tired, and that he was well content to sit in the door and smoke and watch the changing glory of the peaks, and this he did while Viola moved about among the workmen in earnest conversation with her step-father.

"She is explaining me," Serviss reasoned. "I wish I could hear what she says. It would be amusing to know myself as she sees me. I hope she doesn't think me middle-aged as well as wise."

Lambert listened to his daughter's words with at-

tention, for a professor in a college was an exalted person in his eyes, and one of his chief regrets at the moment was that he was unable to say to Serviss, "I am a college man myself"; but this he could not do for the reason that the death of his father had taken him out of his class at the beginning of his third year, and put him at the head of a large family as its breadwinner.

"He looks like a very young man, almost a boy—too young to be a professor; but then"—here his eyes twinkled—"when I was at Jefferson all professors seemed old to me. What's he doing here?"

"Just riding through the mountains on his vacation."

"What does your mother think of him?"

"She likes him very much."

"Well, I won't make any objection, then."

Viola stared—then blushed furiously. "What do you mean?"

"Why, didn't you bring him up here to see how I liked him?"

She pounded him with her little brown fist while tears of mortification filled her eyes. "Now, you stop that! You're teasing me. Why, I've only known him three days."

He laughed silently, shaking his head. "Well, these things move quickly sometimes—and how was I to know but you'd known him in the East—you seemed so chummy-like—"

"You've spoiled everything," she wailed, deeply dis-

turbed and painfully self-conscious. "You're mean to me."

He became instantly contrite. "There, now, don't you mind my joking. Of course I was fooling. It's all safe between us, anyway."

But the mischief was done. She forgave him, but never again would she be the same to him, to her mother, or to the imperturbable young man smoking his pipe beneath the firs. He *was* young—that was only too plain to her now; not so young as Clinton, but not the middle-aged person she had been fancying him to be.

As they were about to start on their homeward trail, Serviss sought opportunity to say: "Mr. Lambert, I met this man Clarke at your house last night, and I want to say that I don't think his influence on your family is particularly wholesome. He's morbid and given to fads."

Lambert replied: "I know what you mean, professor, and I believe you're right. I don't believe in him myself, and I don't take any stock in any of his notions, but my wife does. She thinks he's of the Covenant, somehow. I wish you'd talk with her and try to have her let up on Viola. I don't think they're doin' right by her. If she was my own girl I'd stop it—I would so." Then he added, in a curious tone, this vague defence: "As for Viola, she would be all right if they would leave her alone. She's gifted in a way I don't understand; but if she isn't twisted by Clarke's foolishness she's going to make some man a good wife.

She's a good girl, and, as I say, if she was my own child I'd serve notice that this circle business should stop. I wish you'd talk to 'em. I don't count—but they'll listen to you. I'm glad to have met you. I hope you'll come up again. I'd like to mill that business over with you; it's all very curious, but I'm just plumb distracted with work now."

"I beg you not to apologize—it's time to start back, anyhow."

As they rode away down the valley, the girl silent and constrained, Serviss pondered Lambert's words, which were plainly directed against Clarke. His sense of responsibility was increased by Lambert's trust in him. "This won't do," he decided; "I must pull out or I will find myself laden with the woes of the entire family, and Clarke's distresses besides."

The girl was invested now with compelling pathos. Each mile they descended seemed to deepen the returning shadow on her face. The gayety, the buoyancy of the upward trail was gone. She was silent, constrained, and sad; and he set to work to restore her to the simple and girlish candor of the morning. He called attention to the wonders of the western sky. He shouted to induce echoes, and challenged her to a race, and at the last descent dared her to ride down in one of the ore-buckets, seeking to bring the smiles back to her lips.

She responded to his cheer, but not as before. Something clouded her clear glance—her smiles died quickly, and the poise of her head was less alert.

When they had reached the wagon-road and he could ride by her side, he, too, became serious. "I hope I haven't given offence in any way, Miss Lambert? If I have, I assure you it was entirely unintentional, and I beg your pardon."

She looked away. "You have done nothing," she said, slowly.

"But you seem distinctly less friendly to me. I hope you didn't take anything I said concerning your mother's faith to heart. I had no intention of attacking her beliefs, but I must be honest with you—I don't like Mr. Clarke. There's something unwholesome about him, and what you've told me to-day is not reassuring. Evidently he took the death of his wife very hard, and it has added to his natural tendency towards a sort of spiritual monomania. As a matter of fact, he's more Spiritualist than Calvinist at present. Isn't that so?"

The girl's face grew sullen and weary. "Oh, I don't know, I'm tired of it all."

"He endlessly talks his grind, I suppose. How foolish, how sickly it all seems—here in the presence of uncontaminated nature! In such sunlight as this it seems insanity to sit in a book-walled room and grow bloodless with dreaming over insoluble problems. And yet a friend of mine told me that these towns, and especially California towns, were filled with seers and prophets. The occult flourishes in the high, dry atmosphere, those of the faith say. Don't you permit Clarke to destroy your love of nature, Miss Lambert;

you belong to the sane and sunny world, and he has no right to bring his gloomy conceptions home to you. You are too young and too naturally joyous to be concerned with the problems of disease and death. You were made to be happy."

He ended with greater earnestness than he had intended to use, and the effect of his words on the girl was very great. She could not speak; tears were in her eyes, and her bosom heaved most piteously. His sense of her helplessness deepened, and he added, "Will you permit me to talk to Mr. Clarke about you and your plans?"

This seemed to alarm her. "No, no!" she cried out, distressfully. "Please don't say anything to him about me. It will do no good. You don't understand, and I can't tell you," she added, breathlessly.

"Very well," he said, soothingly; "but, remember, your case interests me exceedingly, and you may call on me at any time and I will gladly help."

She turned a pale and tearful face towards him and extended her hand.

"I thank you very, very much. You *have* helped me more than I can say."

During the remainder of the ride he discussed the springs, the source of the streams, the caverns, and other natural features of the scene, and had the satisfaction of seeing her face in a smile before he left her.

He went back to his hotel with a feeling of having spent six days in her company rather than six hours. She absorbed his entire thought, and so keen was his

sense of her beleaguerment that he resolved to call upon Clarke in order to define his character and to understand his motives. "His passions or his doubt overshadow the girl's sky, and I'm going to find out whether his designs are those of friend or fiend." At the moment he had a feeling that they were those of a devouring fiend.

VII

THE FORCES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS

CLARKE'S church typified the decaying faith of its pastor. Grass was serenely pushing up through the rotting planks of the walk which led from the street to the basement "study" just as the natural goodness and cheer of man returns to dominion through the barriers of custom. The paint was blistering and peeling from the clap-boarding on the sunny side of the main building, and in one of the windows a piece of shingle had been set to repair a broken pane. It had the appearance of neglected age.

"The preacher was right—the creed of his church, as of all others, in a lesser degree perhaps, is too crass, too mechanical, too childish to tally the ideals of a generation which is each day awakening to some new potency of matter, some wider conception of the universe."

On the study door, checked by the sun and worn by the rain, the tourist applied his knuckle, and a voice, formal and sonorous, called out, "Come in!"

Opening the door, which led directly into a dark little den with only one window, Serviss confronted Clarke reading by a green-shaded lamp, in whose light he ap-

peared as pallid, as remote from the sun, as a monk of the Middle Ages.

He rose quickly upon recognizing his visitor. "I'm glad to see you, professor; I beg your pardon for not rising. I thought the knock came from my janitor. Take a seat, please." He gathered a handful of books from a yellow arm-chair and pushed it forward with his foot. "Your visit is most opportune. I was meditating a call at your hotel to-night. I wanted to get your idea concerning two or three scientific discoveries which seem to me to have a most important bearing on the welfare of the race."

Serviss became each moment more keenly aware of being face to face with a task which required all his tact, his self-possession, and his wit, for the man before him was immured in self-conceit, accustomed to carrying his point by a rush of words, and was, withal, a student possessed of unusual intellectual resource. He made a very handsome figure as he took his seat amid his books. His face, freshly shaven, gleamed like blue-white marble, and his abundant dark hair, drawn away from his brow by careless fingers, lay in a tumbled mass above his ear, adding a noticeably sculptural finish to his shapely head. His hands, thin, long, and restless, alone betrayed the excitement which the coming of this Master of the Germ engendered in him. He was eager to question, but he waited for his visitor to begin, which he did with manly directness.

"I have called to talk with you about Miss Lambert. She and her mother having honored me by asking my

advice as to her study in New York, I would like to know whether you, as their pastor, counsel this movement on her part?"

The clergyman's sentient fingers sought, found, and closed tightly upon a ruler. "That I cannot answer directly," he said, slowly. "Miss Lambert's case is not simple. She is a very remarkable musician, that you know, and yet her talent is fitful. She sometimes plays very badly. I am not at all sure she has the temperament which will succeed on the music-stage."

"I made a somewhat similar remark to the mother myself."

"Moreover, her interests are not the only factors in the problem. Mrs. Lambert's life is bound up in her daughter, and without her she would suffer. The well-being of the family as a whole is against her going."

"You have your own interests, too, I dare say."

Clarke's eyes narrowed. "What do you mean?"

"It would be difficult to replace her here in your church-work, would it not?"

The clergyman returned to his candid manner. "It would, indeed. She is the only organist in the village, and is invaluable to me, especially in the Sunday-school."

"I am disposed to consider her interests, and not those of the mother and father, or even the church," pursued Serviss. "I am of those who recognize the rights of the young as of chief importance to the race."

Clarke seized upon this as a gage of battle. "The

race! Oh, you inexorable men of science! What do we care for the race? We would save individuals. The race can take care of itself. The race is only an abstraction—it cannot suffer. Of what avail to the individual to know that the race is to be perfected a thousand years hence?"

"We wander," interposed Serviss, with decision. "The question is really quite simple. Shall we advise the Lamberts to send their daughter to New York to study music, or shall we counsel her to remain here, and in marriage to some good, honest young miner resign herself to the common lot of women. Her talent should determine."

A dull flush rose to the cheek of the preacher, his eyes fell and his voice unconsciously softened. "Marriage is still a long way off for Viola Lambert; she is but a child, and, besides—" He paused.

Serviss smiled. "They marry young in the West, I believe. Besides, she must be twenty, and quite robust."

"She seems but a child to me," repeated Clarke, returning to his clerical manner, and something in the hypocritical tone of his speech angered and disgusted Serviss, and to himself he said: "He is a fraud. He does not intend to let the girl pass out of his control." Then aloud he reopened the discussion: "It all comes back to a question of the girl's talent. If it is sufficient to enable her to earn a living in some larger community, she has a right to go; if not, she should certainly stay here. I believe in the largest possible life

for every human being, and Miss Lambert's ambition is a perfectly legitimate craving. Furthermore, she seems eager to escape from this life. She hints at some sort of mysterious persecution. She has not defined her troubles in detail, but I inferred that some undesirable suitor made life miserable for her." With these words he bent a keen glance at Clarke.

"You are quite mistaken, sir. Miss Lambert has many admirers but no suitors. I have cautioned her against entanglements of that kind. I have shown how they would interfere with her work."

"You mean her work in your church?"

Clarke's eyes again took on the narrowed glance of suspicion. "Partly that, but more on account of other and higher work which I hope to see her do."

"To what do you refer?"

"Pardon me, of that I cannot at present speak; I can only say that it is a work whose preliminary stages can be passed as well here as in New York City—better, in fact."

"You arouse my curiosity—"

Clarke suddenly awoke from his musing and became aggressive. He resolutely changed the subject. "Before you go I want to ask you—do you, as a chemist, deny the immortality of the soul?"

"Chemistry does not concern itself with the soul."

'Do you, as a *man*, deny the immortality of the soul?"

"I neither deny nor affirm. I have never concerned myself with the question."

Clarke was a little daunted. "You leave the most vital question in all this world uninvestigated!"

"Yes, because I was long ago convinced that the problem of death, like the origin of life, is insoluble, and why waste time on the insoluble? To pore upon the constitution of matter is a species of mediævalism. I am concerned with what bacteria do—not what they are."

"I deny that the question of immortality *is* insoluble!" replied Clarke, his eyes glowing with the fire of his faith. "It is because you scientists ignore the phenomena of spiritism that you remain ignorant of the messages which come from the other side."

"What other side?"

"The realm of those you call 'the dead.'" He caught up a book. "There is the word of a German scientist, a hundred times more eminent than you, and here are the conclusions of two great Englishmen, members of the Royal Society, who have investigated and have been convinced of the return of the dead."

"I know those men," replied Serviss, coldly. "The common opinion is that they ceased to be scientists when they wrote these volumes. All were past their prime and bereaved, and one was nearly blind. Their true balance of judgment was lost before they set to work on what you call their investigations. The German was considered insane on the 'Fourth Dimension.' But what has this girl to do with your 'realm of the dead' or my study of cancerous tissue? She belongs

to the realm of music and flowers. I beg you to remember that. You have no right to throw over her the shadow of your religious perplexities any more than I would have the right to lay before her my knowledge of parasitic growths. Youth, and especially young womanhood, has its rights, and one of them is to be blithe. You admit that you are losing faith; why destroy hers? Your doubts and despairs should not touch her. But they have. She is troubled and sad by reason of your attitude towards life, and especially by your insistence upon the presence of death in the world."

This was not precisely what Serviss had started out to say, but as he went on a sense of being misled, a suspicion that he was playing into the hands of the enemy, kept him from putting into words the strong conviction which had seized him.

The preacher put his interlocked fingers behind his head, and, looking at his visitor beneath lowered, contemptuous lids, replied: "My dear sir, you don't know a thing of what you're talking about."

The note of patronization, the tone of superior wisdom, stung the scientist. He felt in the clergyman's reply not merely opposition, but insult. His very pose was an affront.

"I don't know your motives, that is perfectly true, but I can infer them. It is due me to say that I am not in the habit of mixing in where I am not wanted; but as Mr. and Mrs. Lambert have both asked my advice, I shall give it. The girl is morbid and un-

happy here, and I shall tell them to send her away for a time. She has musical talent. I shall advise them to allow her to go East to study."

The preacher's smile deepened into a sneer. "I think I understand *your* motives, and I shall oppose her going. What is there to restrain a man who recognizes neither spirit nor God?"

Serviss was at first astounded, then hot at the grossness of this insinuation, and his strong, brown hands clinched in the instinct to punish—to retaliate—but his anger cooled to the level of words, and he said: "This interview has more than convinced me of the justice of Lambert's distrust of you. I shall see him again and repeat the warning I have already given." And with these words he turned and went out.

It was with a sense of astonishment and relief that he re-entered the daylight, for the sunset glow was not yet out of the sky. A moment before the world had seemed enveloped in midnight darkness, and lo! here now were the splendid peaks, the singing river, all aglow with golden light. The encounter of the moment before receded swiftly, became incredible, but the preacher remained squat in his den like a vampire in his cave.

As he went slowly up the street he acknowledged a feeling of growing weight, of uncertainty. Having given his word in such wise, he had become the defender, the protector of one of whom he knew nothing that was reassuring. His youth seemed to have sud-

denly taken on care. His vacation had ended in a cloud of distrust. From the detachment of the scientist he had descended to the level of a moralist and meddler, and, most significant of all, a meddler in the affairs of a young and attractive girl.

VIII

DR. BRITT EXPLAINS

SERVISS had just written and sealed a letter to his sister, wherein he said, "I shall remain a few days longer here in the mountains—they interest me greatly," when a knock on the door announced the bell-boy bearing a card.

"Dr. Britt!" exclaimed Serviss, with pleasure. "Bring him up, please," and to himself added, "Now we will learn something definite about this amazing group of people."

The manner in which Britt entered the room proclaimed a distinctive character. He edged himself through the door, not stealthily, but carelessly, casually. He, too, was tall, with a wide, dark beard curling over very pink and rather plump cheeks, and in his bright black eyes a sardonic sheen played as he loosely shook his host's hand. His expression was that of a man perpetually amused, as if anticipating a joke or recollecting a mockery. His voice was as languid as his limbs, but his words were precise and to their mark.

Serviss greeted him heartily. "I am glad to meet you, Dr. Britt; take a seat. I have heard of you through Miss Lambert."

"I saw you on the street," replied Britt, without change of expression, "so I looked over the register to find out who you were. I'm mighty glad to meet up with you. I know you very well by reputation, and Weissmann is an old acquaintance of our family's. What are you doing out here? Visiting the Lamberts?"

For some reason this directness disturbed Serviss a little. "No—oh no! I just drifted in over the divide from the desert, and met Miss Lambert by accident, quite by accident. I dropped into Colorow to rest and rinse the desert dust away, before returning East. Turn about is fair play—what are you doing here?"

Britt struck his left breast with his thumb. "Same old story—busted lung. Whenever you strike a suspicious character out here he's either a 'one-lunger' or a 'remittance man.'"

"That's what makes your country worth while."

"I don't know about that, but you'll find a good many of us waiting. When you fellows develop an anti-toxin for the consumption 'bug,' we're all going back to God's country."

"We're hot on its trail," replied Serviss, jocularly.

"I know you are. I 'read after you,' as they say out here. In fact, I've got a little 'farm,' and take a shy at breeding the beasts myself. I'd like you to come in and give me a hint or two."

"With pleasure," Serviss heartily responded. "So you know Weissmann?"

"I used to. My father was an attaché of the embassy at Berlin at one time, and was a factor in getting

old 'Hair and Goggles' to come over; he was a conceited ass at that time, with more wool than brains, the governor always said; but the governor wanted to do something for the college."

Serviss studied the card. "Do I know your father?—is he still in public life?"

"He is not." Britt's glance veered. "The governor, I'm sorry to say, has a weakness for toddy, and I've retired him. He boards in White Plains with Patsy Cline summers, and relapses winters."

Serviss changed the subject. "By-the-way, I want to ask you about this man Clarke. What kind of a chap is he?"

Britt's answer was languid but adequate. "Three parts fakir and the rest fanatic."

"I was afraid so—and the Lamberts, what of them?"

"Mrs. Lambert is a dear old ninny. Viola is a mighty bright girl suffering from a well-developed case of hysteria and auto-hypnosis."

"What do you mean?" asked Serviss, sharply.

Britt checked himself. "I ought not to speak of it, I suppose, but, as you are a stranger and can keep a professional secret, I will explain. The mother is a spiritualist—has been for years—and, being on the lookout for it, naturally discovered what she calls 'mediumship' in Viola when a child. By carefully nursing the delusion in herself and in her subject, she has been able to develop a rare 'up-rush of the subliminal,' as Myers would say. When I came here to

take Dr. Randall's practice, I found among his papers elaborate notes on the girl's development."

"You amaze me!" exclaimed Serviss. "She seems so normal and so charming."

"In reality she's the most extraordinary puzzle I have ever undertaken to solve. It seems, according to Randall, that this power came upon her soon after the death of her little brother—a couple of years younger than herself. I'll let you see these notes if you like. They're very curious; in fact, I brought the book along—I wanted your opinion of them and your advice as to the girl's treatment."

Serviss leaned forward in growing interest. "By all means let me see the notes. You begin to throw light on something that puzzled me."

Britt drew a small brown book from his pocket and said: "Your first thought will be to relate this business to hysteria, and one of Randall's first entries is a reflection along these lines: 'There is much inconclusive literature on the shelves of medical libraries on the subject of hysteria, and many diverse ailments are thrown into that box of explanations.'" Britt looked up. "He's right there, but he goes on to slate the medical profession thus: 'The mind of a child, like any other expanding, growing thing, tends to depart from the norm—loves apparently to surprise its progenitors. Holding in its grasp latent tendencies of all ages, of all the race, it may at any time astound by its sudden expansion in unexpected directions, as well as by its inexplicable failure to follow ordained grooves.'"

Here Britt paused again. "You can see the old chap was hard hit. He now gets evolutionary. 'We are all goats, satyrs, and serpents potentially—even from the neurologist's point of view our minds are infinitely complex.'"

Serviss said, "All this is wise, but is it pertinent?"

"He's coming at it. 'Now, what we men of medicine call hysteria seems to be a violent and, in a sense, unaccountable departure from the norm, induced by the removal of some check—by some deep change in the nervous constitution. Thus a girl suddenly refuses to eat, has visions, shouts, and sings uncontrollably, perhaps speaks in an unknown tongue—she is said to be hysterical. A mother, hearing of the death of her child, begins to laugh, passes at length into a cataleptic state, during which a child's voice sounds from her throat; this, too, is hysteria. A man of forty-five becomes melancholy, professes to hear music inaudible to others, develops automatic writing, and trances in which he is able to hear distant voices, and to read sealed letters; this, too, is hysteria. In reality, nothing is explained.'"

"What of it?" interrupted Serviss. "Let's have the application."

"He makes his point in the next paragraph: 'In conformity with this habit, when called in by Mrs. Lambert to study her daughter, who had passed suddenly into deep sleep and was speaking with the voice of her grandfather, I, with owlish gravity, pronounced her attack a case of hysteria. "Take her on a little

trip," said I. "Keep her well nourished and out-of-doors, and she will outgrow it.'"'

"Very good advice."

"So it was, but mark the sequel: '*She did not outgrow it.*' He puts this in italics. 'The power within her gained in mastery, and, what is most singular and baffling to me, she continues to be a hearty, healthy child in all other ways, and yet at times she seems the calm centre of a whirlwind of invisible forces. Chairs, books, thimbles, even the piano, move to and fro without visible pushing. Electric snapping is heard in the carpet under her little feet, and loud knocking comes upon the walls—'"

"Ah!" exclaimed Serviss, and recalled the knocking at his first visit, while the girl was at the piano.

"Here he drops into italics again. '*One by one all the familiar manifestations of the spiritualistic medium are being reproduced by this pretty maiden here in this mountain home.*'"

"Good Lord, what a pity!" exclaimed Serviss.

Britt read on: "'The mother, aggrieved and alarmed by the rude way in which the girl is buffeted, has been put to her paces to conceal the topsy-turvy doings of her household. Stones are hurled through the windows, cabinets are opened by invisible and silent locksmiths, *and I have seen these things and can offer no explanation.*'" Britt closed the book. "Right here the old doctor lost his nerve, up to this time he was a fairly acute observer. His next entry is evidently some weeks or, possibly, months later. He says:

'Slowly we have learned to understand the phenomena, but we cannot control them, and the child is still cruelly embarrassed by intrusive tappings and cracklings as she visits her friends or as she sits in her seat in school. She has become afraid to sleep alone, and calls piteously for a light whenever the noises begin.'"

"The poor child—"

"You may well say that," replied Britt. "She has told me that her time of greatest trial comes just after the family have had their evening meal, and while she is seated at her book; but Randall grows eloquent in his description of what took place: 'Almost every night at seven o'clock the obscure powers begin their uncanny and invisible riot, ending by seizing upon the child as if to destroy her, compelling her in the end to sleep. Then her voice, her limbs, seem at the disposal of some invisible intelligence.' You see, the old man is weakening. He says no more of hysteria, and nothing about taking the girl away."

"Do you mean to tell me he joined in fostering this delusion?"

"Mark his change of tone. He goes on: 'The mother, convinced by her reading, as well as by messages in writing, believes that the spirits of her dead are trying to communicate with her, and so sits night after night terrified yet hoping, waiting for further instructions from the imponderable ones.'" Britt turned a few pages rapidly. "Listen to this. Here is the key to the old man's change of heart: 'To-night the child began to speak to me in the voice of a man.

Hoarse words rose from deep in her throat, a voice and words impossible to her in her normal condition. The voice purported to be my father's. It is all very singular. I do not understand how she could know the things this voice uttered to me.' You see," said Britt, "he has ceased to be the medical adviser." He turned a number of pages slowly. "Well, the girl passed rapidly through these various phases, according to Randall. She wrote messages with her left hand, wherein her grandfather McLeod detailed the method of treating her, and Randall was so far gone that he acquiesced. From her eleventh to her fifteenth year she lived under this 'control.' The manifestations increased in power and definiteness. The 'controls' at last were three—her grandfather, her brother, and her own father. At sixteen the most violent of the manifestations ceased, and the girl went away to school. At this point Joe Lambert enters—he married the mother."

"How did he take these doings?"

"He seems to have been a silent and reluctant witness; the doctor only mentions him incidentally. There are one or two pitiful letters from the girl written while at school, detailing several embarrassing returns of the 'spirits,' but, on the whole, she was happy. According to the record, her vacations must have been a torment, for 'Waltie,' that's no *Polter-geist*, seemed determined to make up for lost time. He came every night, making life a hell for his sister. She could go nowhere, and it was with the greatest difficulty that the mother kept her dreadful secret."

Serviss, with darkened brow, writhed uneasily in his chair. "I have heard of these things before now, but this is a new view of a medium's development. I don't understand the mother's attitude."

"Randall notes that the mother was resigned and content as soon as she was convinced of the return of her dead father and husband and son, and at present will not think of giving up her fancied communion, especially as the 'guides' constantly assure her that 'they' will protect the girl. But observe the senility of this note in Randall's diary: 'Martha comes regularly to me now, and I am happy in a renewed sense of her companionship. Indeed, I fancy at times that I can see her. She showed me her hands last night; I could see them plainly against the window. I had quite a controversy with Lambert after the sitting. "It's all bad business," he said. "I am scared when I think of what's going to become of Viola. Here she is growing to be a big girl, and a pretty girl, and she ought to be out in company—she ought to be singing and dancing like other girls. She ought to marry like other girls and be happy, and she can't be so long as these things are going on. It isn't right."'"

"No more was it," said Serviss. "It was villainous."

"Randall was too far gone to even agree. 'But it hasn't hurt her,' I replied; 'and, indeed, this marvellous fact resigns me to the practice. I can't endure now the thought of being cut off from Martha and Paul, our precious boy. It would be like shutting the door in their faces. Besides, they are in control; we could

not stop their use of the girl if we were to try. As for me, it is now my life. I am old. My friends, my dear ones, are all on that side. I have only a few more days to live, and then—' Right here the old man stopped. He lived a month or two after that, but he made no more notes, and when I came on the scene Clarke was in control of the situation. I had no acquaintance with the family and no personal knowledge of the case till Lambert called one day and told me of the sittings going on in the little cottage. He had a notion that I might be able to cure the girl."

Serviss had listened to Britt with growing pain and indignation—pain at thought of Viola's undoing, indignation that the mother and her physician could so complacently join in the dark proceedings. "Of course, you took hold of the case."

"I tried to, but Mrs. Lambert and Clarke would not admit that the girl was in need of my care. They invited me to join the circle as a spectator, which I did. I am still the onlooker—merely."

"You don't mean to say they are still experimenting with her?"

"You may call it that. They sit regularly two or three nights each week. Clarke is preparing to renounce his pulpit and startle the world by a book on 'spiritism,' as he calls his faith. The girl is his source of thunder."

Serviss sank back into his chair and darkly pondered. "That explains a number of very strange words and actions on the girl's part. What is her

attitude? She seemed to me extremely discontented and unhappy."

"She *is* unhappy. She understands her situation and has moments of rebellion. She knows that she is cut off from her rightful share in the world of young people, and feels accursed."

"I can understand that, and several things she said to me corroborate your analysis of her feeling. But tell me—you have attended these sittings—what takes place—what does the girl profess to do?"

"I don't know. I can't determine Clarke's share in the hocus-pocus. It all takes place in the dark."

"It always does. It belongs there."

"Many of the good old 'stunts' of the professional medium are reproduced. Lights dance about, guitars are played, chairs nose about your knees, hands are laid on your cheek, and so on."

"You don't think she is wilfully tricking?" Serviss asked this with manifest anxiety.

"There's every inducement—darkness, deeply anxious friends. It would not be strange if she did 'help on' now and then."

"What a deplorable thing!"

"And yet I'm not so sure that she wilfully deceives, though I have detected her in fraud. Probably the whole thing began in some childish disorder which threw her system out of balance. There are hundreds of such cases in medical literature. She was 'possessed,' as of old, with a sort of devilish 'secondary personality.' She probably wrote treatises left-handed and up-

side-down. They often begin that way. The mother, lately bereaved, was convinced of her daughter's occult powers. She nursed the delusion, formed a circle, sat in the darkness, petting the girl when things happened, mourning when the walls were silent—and there you are! 'Sludge the Medium' all over again, in a small way. Probably the girl didn't intend to deceive anybody at first, but she was tolled along from one fakery to another, till at last she found herself powerless in the grasp of her self-induced coma. She is anxious to escape her slavery; she revolts, and is most unhappy, but sees no way out. That's my present understanding of the case. Now, what is your advice? What can I do? I am deeply interested in the girl, but I have no authority to act."

"You shock and disgust me," said Serviss, profoundly moved. "The girl seems too fine for such chicanery. Who is this man Clarke?"

"He was a sensational preacher in Brooklyn a few years ago, but a hemorrhage in the pulpit cut short his career in the East. He came out here and got better, but his wife, who had a weak heart, couldn't stand the altitude. She died—a sacrifice to her husband. He's the kind of a man who demands sacrifice. After his wife's death, he fairly lived at the Lambert cottage, and is now in full control. The girl's will is so weakened that she is but a puppet in the grasp of his powerful personality."

Serviss was now absorbed in reconstructing his conception of Viola. Her situation appealed to him with

the greatest poignancy, but his ability to help her seemed gone. Fair as she looked, she was to be avoided, as one tainted with leprosy. His impression that first afternoon had been true — she was beleaguered, if not lost.

Britt was saying: "If the girl were under age I'd appeal to the health authorities of the state—I really would, much as I like Mrs. Lambert—but she is of age, and, what is more to the point, Clarke has won her love and confidence, and what can you do? He fills her horizon, and the mother favors him. He talks to her of her daughter's 'mission to the world,' and suchlike vapor, and has the girl herself half convinced that her cataleptic states are of divine origin. I confess I haven't felt free to make any real tests—you can't treat her like a professional, you know—but she seems to have induced by long practice a genuine coma, and until some clamp is applied I can't say whether she or Clarke is the chief offender. Now what would you do?"

Serviss burned with the heat of his anger. "Don't reveal to me any more of this wretched business. I can't advise. If you, her physician, and Lambert, her step-father, can't put a stop to it, what can I, a passing stranger, do? I don't want to know anything more about it. Why, man, it's diabolical! To warp and imprison a girl like that! To think of that bewitching creature as a common trickster—appalls me. And to think that good people, millions of them, believe in such mummery! It is incredible!"

"You'd be surprised at the number of somewhat

similar cases we find among our patients. Since coming here I've gone in for a little library of books on the subject. Every physician during his practice comes upon one or more of these abnormal cases which, as Randall says, we label, for convenience, '*hysteria*,' and I'm free to say that I don't think we're at the bottom of the matter. Let's be just to this girl. There are points in her favor."

Serviss protested. "Not another word. It's too painful."

Britt persisted. "I was merely going to say that I think there is some basis for all this humbuggery. These mediums don't start from nothing. They nearly all begin with some abnormality. Some submerged power rises to the surface of their minds like a sea-serpent, and that distinguishes them as seers. Curious friends crowd around, then the lying begins. It's going to be worth while to take the subject up, by-and-by. I'd do it myself if I could live in New York City." He rose. "Well, I don't blame you for not going into this case—I wish I were clear of it myself—but I was hoping you'd had some experience that would help me." Thereupon the conversation shifted to other grounds.

After Britt went out Serviss sat in brooding uneasiness over his visitor's sad revelations. He had known Viola Lambert but three days, and yet these revelations concerning her affected him most painfully, quite vitally. His pleasure in her and in the mother and their pretty home was utterly gone, and the

breaking-off of this acquaintance left an ache in his heart.

Of course he put all this on very general grounds. "I hate to lose faith in any one. It is a shock to know that I can be so wholly deceived by appearance. Clarke is really the one to blame in the deception. I can't believe the girl wilfully deceives, and yet Britt was explicit, and he seems to be a keen, dispassionate observer."

Thereupon he began to pack in order to take the early morning train for the East. He decided not to see her again, and posted a polite note saying he had been obliged to return to New York, and that he regretted his inability to call.

As he stood on the rear platform of his train next day, looking back up the cañon towards the shining crest of Colorow, he had a craven sense of having deserted a helpless young girl in the hour of her greatest trial.

IX

ANTHONY CLARKE, EVANGEL

MR. BRITT was right. Mrs. Lambert was very fond of Clarke—had, indeed, quite taken him into her heart. He was at once son and spiritual adviser, and his wishes had the force of commands. His bereavement could not have anguished her much more keenly had Adele been her own daughter, and this affliction still lay like a mist between them, preventing even a foreboding of his impending confession of desire. Her remembrance of the beauty and high character of his wife made Viola seem doubly the child; and so when, from time to time, some busybody hinted at the minister's marked intimacy with her daughter, she put the covert insinuation away with a frank word—"You mustn't even think such a thing."

Viola, too, from the very beginning of their acquaintance, had admired the young minister quite as deeply as Serviss imagined, and had humbled herself before Adele as to a very wonderful lady of the mysterious outer world, whose deportment, dress, and speech had been sources of enlightenment; and when she passed away, the land of the shadow became just that much richer, more complete in its dominion over her.

Almost at once Adele spoke through the vale, saying, "I am here to help and guide."

Thus all powers of earth and heaven had combined to make Clarke the ruler of Viola Lambert's little world. He stood between her and young Clinton Ward and all other suitors—he absorbed her thought. She admired his gifts, and trembled beneath the power of his dark eyes, his magnetic hands, and especially responded to the music of his deep voice, which was very enthralling when it took on the pleading melody of the lover. At times he filled her with such passion of vague unrest that life became a torment, for she was of the age when the world is for the lover's conquest, and the cadence of love's song means most and is least understood; and yet at times she felt a fear of him which chilled her. She was struggling, too, with growing ambitions, and with an expanding knowledge of the world which was beginning to make her critical—the wonder of the child was giving place to the insight of the woman. The wish to shake off her invisible tormentors and be like other girls was in reality a demand for the right to be loved and valued for her own natural self, entirely free from the touch of spectral hands.

She was disappointed that Clarke did not understand and sympathize with this wish, but that he desired her in marriage had never once entered her mind. He was a minister, and she reverenced his office, and, besides, she considered herself but a girl, too ignorant and too trivial to be the wife of one so high in holy service.

With the coming of the young professor a new force seemed entered upon the saner side of her life. She recognized in him a master of the great outer world—the Eastern world, the world of the unafraid—and her determination to at least subordinate her "controls" had expanded swiftly to a most dangerous height during the few hours of her companionship with him. She felt that he would sympathize with her—that he would help her. The clear positiveness of his speech, his health, his humor, grew upon her each moment, and she resolved to confide in him when next they met.

Part of this upspringing revolt, this antagonism, Clarke divined, and the determination to arrest her purpose, the desire to possess her entirely and at once, excluded every other wish or plan, and to feel was to act with Anthony Clarke, for he was born to emotional experience as the sparks fly upward. He had ever been a creature of unreason, morbidly conscious of self—and naturally, for in him struggled the blood of three races. His father was Scotch, and his mother—Spanish on the spindle side and Irish by way of a most mercurial father—remained an unsolved problem all her days, even to her husband. Her laughter was as illogical as her tears. Her household could never tell what the next hour would bring forth, so ready were her sympathies, so instant her despairs. She lived all her life at the heights or the depths, with never a day of serene, womanly, reasonable action, and when she died her passing was of the same emotional stress.

She clung to earth like one whose body was about to drop into soundless deeps.

Her son had inherited all her fervency, her inconstancy of purpose, as well as her tendency to collapse under pressure. Physically he had always been of slender figure, with weak lungs, and these weaknesses he had used to free himself from work, from responsibility.

He was not a hypocrite—in that Britt was mistaken. He was by nature deeply religious. His soul aspired, at times, to high things. He was sympathetic to actual pain, and had always been morbidly in awe of death. The sight of any poor, lost, and suffering man threw him into instant, profound, and melancholy pity. A dead beetle in the road, a fly caught in a spider's web, a young robin water-soaked and bedraggled, appalled him, even as a boy, and he pondered them with sad and questioning eyes long after his young companions had forgotten them. Where had the light of their eyes fled? he asked himself. He found no sport in killing any creature, and more than once he used all his slender force to defend a cat from stoning; and yet he was known to have joined the worst youths of his native town in secret drinking-bouts, thereby acquiring the reputation of a liar and sneak, as well as that of licentiate. At seventeen, just when the appetite for liquor seemed beyond his control, a great "revivalist" won his soul, as the saying went, and at twenty-three he assumed his first pastorate.

Success as a pulpit orator was assured by the charm of his voice, the magnetism of his manner. His head was singularly handsome, and often when he spoke his face was irradiated like that of a seraph, and the women of all his congregations adored him from the first glance, embarrassing him with their ardent praises. That he had remained faithful to his wife in spite of this adoration was evidence of her great beauty of character. She was, indeed, his safeguard and his hourly monitor while she lived.

For him she had sacrificed all her friends in the East. She came to the mountains without a murmur, she bore with him, cheered him, upheld him in a hundred ways—and when she died his world went black as midnight. It was as if in the midst of a monster, interminable cavern his one starlike light had gone out in his hand. For days he beat his head against the wall, crying defiant curses against his God; but in the end he sank into voiceless despair. Then it was, as he lay prone and passive, that he began to hear mysterious whisperings and tappings on the walls of his cavern of despond. He rose and listened. He groped his way towards the dim light. He returned to the world of men. His faith in the Scriptures was weakened; but he soon discovered a wondrous change of heart towards those who claimed to be intermediaries between the worlds of matter and of spirit. He turned his attention to the study of the physical evidences of life after death.

Up to that moment he had given but little credence to Mrs. Lambert's half-hearted confidences concerning

her own change of faith, and, as Viola had been away at school much of the time, he had forgotten that she was concerned in the mother's confession.

The disclosure of her powers, as he told Dr. Britt—after they were both involved in the curious case—came violently, without warning, a few days after Adele's death. "I was sitting with Mrs. Lambert in sad conversation, seeking her aid and comfort. Viola occupied a low chair beside the shaded lamp, a book upon her knee. She was listening to me. I had just finished saying, in deeply passionate tones, 'I would give all my hope of life for one whisper from the lips of my Adele,' when the room began to darken. At first I thought the effect lay in my own brain, but a moment later I perceived that the light had actually begun to fail. We all watched it in silence for a moment, then Mrs. Lambert remarked, 'Viola, Mary forgot to fill the lamp.'

"Even as she spoke a cool wind blew over my head and lay along my hands. The flame leaped into the air, the room went black, save where a pale glow coming from the street lay upon the floor. A faint rustling arose, a hand touched my cheek, soft lips brushed my ear, and a whisper that stopped the beating of my heart began. A vague, inarticulate murmur, at first; but at last I plainly heard my spirit-wife speaking in gentle reproof—'Tony, Tony, I am always with you.'

"The whisper ceased. The hand was taken away. A deep sigh came to my ear. My Adele was gone! The moment of ecstasy was over. I sat stunned, inert,

my brain whirling with the far-reaching import of this experience. Before I could drag myself to my feet Mrs. Lambert, practical and undisturbed, threw open the door and let the light of the street in. Only then, as I looked on Viola, lying in trance with white, set face, did I first connect her in any way with my sweet communion with Adele.

"Then, like a flash of joyous light irradiating my soul, came the conviction that she was the medium through whom my Adele had spoken—that she had opened the gates of silence for me.

"I was no longer body—I was a brain suspended in some invisible sea of force. Here was the reality of religion. Here was the answer to the anguished cry of humanity—an answer to my prayers which the Hebrew Scriptures could not give. There *was* a life beyond the grave. The spirit *did* persist after the decay of the body. And here in this little room, when my despair was deepest, the proof had come, blinding me with its beauty.

"Then I said: 'Viola, you have given me the most wonderful moment of all my life. You brought my Adele and put her hand in mine. Through you I heard her voice again. God has chosen you for a great work; I feel it. You should not repel these powers; your gift may mean the most exquisite comfort to thousands—nay, millions—of bereaved souls.'

"I was amazed at the vehement unreason of her reply. 'I don't want it!' she cried. 'I hate it! I won't sit again!' Then I tried to persuade her of her great

mission, to no result. The following night I came, and we pleaded with her to act again with us, but she still passionately refused. 'Why don't they come to you or to mother,' she complained, 'instead of to me?' To this I said: 'There is no answer. They have made you their instrument, and it is your duty to do their will.'

"That night the little parlor became a battle-field. Mrs. Lambert had invoked the aid of Donald McLeod, her father, the girl's 'control.' Viola resisted almost to the death. It seemed as if a strong hand clutched her throat, commanding obedience. I feared she would be torn to pieces, and at last I protested. 'She is suffering too much; let us give over the sitting.' But Mrs. Lambert said, quietly: 'It is her own fault. She is being punished for her obstinacy. Father is disciplining her—he will not harm her.' In the end the power conquered, and the girl lay back in slumber so deep, so dead, that her breath seemed stilled forever—her hands icily inert, her face as white as marble."

"Why didn't you interfere?" asked Britt, sternly.

"How could I, when the mother and the girl's 'controls' were minded otherwise? Besides, I began to believe in the girl's mission—I began to understand the enormous value of her work. My God, Dr. Britt, had I that girl's gift I would engross the world. I would write such words across the tomb that death would seem as sweet as baby slumber. I would make the grave a gateway to the light. I would eliminate sorrow from the earth. The Bible no longer satisfies

me. I want something more than cold, black letters on a printed page. I want to know! I want to thrill the world with a new message; and here, now, at my hand, is a medium. I can never have this power—perhaps it is only given to babes and to sucklings, but I can spread the light. You, Dr. Britt, shall help me. Let us study this wonderful gift. Let us concentrate our energies upon this supreme problem. I will note all that comes to us, and I will write a burning book—a revelation that shall go round the globe, guiding and gladdening every human soul. Think of it! There is no mightier mission on earth. This girl can be, and must be, made a savior, a hope-bringer, to thousands of despairing souls!"

To this fervid appeal Britt remained impassive and coldly critical—till, chilled and repelled, Clarke had withdrawn his confidence. The two still met occasionally in Mrs. Lambert's home, but their antagonism had deepened to actual hatred. Britt, impotent to help, had long since ceased to protest, even to the girl herself; for he had learned that every revolt on her part brought keener pain and deeper humiliation in its train. He entered upon a study of the subject, and thus far had found little to encourage the hope of the girl's redemption from her maladies.

Clarke, too, had surrounded himself with every available book which bore upon these baffling phases of human experiences, and had put himself in touch with every society organized for the investigation of occult phenomena — and in his dark little den

brooded day and night over the dimly apprehended laws of the unseen universe. He left his studies only to be with Viola, who had become as necessary to him as his daily food—as indispensable as air. She was at once his hope and his very present help. How to keep her, how to mould her to his will, how to use her to his great purpose of ridding the world of the fear of death—these became his hourly care, his only interest.

To these ends he strove to enthrall her by his singing, by his oratory, and by his love of poetry, knowing well that to drum constantly upon the harsh string of her "mission" would revolt her; and she, thus beset, thus beleaguered, gave over her rebellion, resigning herself to her guides till this ruddy and powerful young man of science came into her world to fill her with new determination to escape from her mental slavery.

Clarke loved this girl, not as he had loved Adele, of course, but quite as humanly. Her mediumship, so vital to the world, so sacred in his eyes, had but added to her allurement. "All that I am, and all I hope to be, is bound up in the possession of that sweet, wonderful child," he said, in acknowledgment of his discovery. In a very subtle way he now apprehended a change in the girl, and, realizing how utterly his aims, his daily happiness, his future depended upon her, he rose from his seat resolved not merely to advise against her going away, but to claim her as his own—his wife.

"My wife!" At this deeply significant word Adele's pleading face rose vividly before him. Writhing with shame before her reproachful glance, he cried out:

"But I cannot live alone! And then consider—I shall be able to meet you each day, perhaps each hour, and as I myself develop in grace of soul I may come to you without any medium. I am not disloyal to you, Adele. I love this girl, I confess that; but not as I loved you. You were my true wife, the only spouse I can ever have—you filled my soul. My love for this girl is that of a father—a teacher. I need her for— Oh, my Adele, I will confess, before you came back to me through this child I was weary of the earth, ready to violently end my anguish. Viola put your hand again in mine—she gave me to hear your voice. I cannot bear to lose those priceless moments, and yet I must do so if she goes from me. Am I not justified in desiring her presence? Come to me; tell me, to-night, what you would have me do. Be merciful, my angel spouse. Remember my empty, desolate heart. Remember the greatness of the work I have set myself to do. Oh, my sweet spirit, if you could only put an arm about my neck *now*, without any other interposing soul! Come to me, whisper to me—now! Let me know your presence here as I sit alone and despairing—"

He ceased to pray, and bowed his head upon his desk and waited in an agony of hope—waited while the darkness deepened and the splendid eternal song of the river proclaimed the futility and folly of man. A cricket sang with heart-piercing cheer, as if to say, "I die to-morrow, but I never despair." But no silken rustle, no whispering voice came to still the agony welling in bitter sighs from the lips of the tempted man.

X

CLARKE'S WOOING

MRS. LAMBERT was face to face with a decision of almost equal moment — was, indeed, in the midst of formulating the question which perplexed her, in order that she might lay it before her invisible guides for their consideration. She had just written upon a slate these words: "Shall I take Viola and go East, or shall I send her on alone?" when Clarke's foot was heard outside her door. Hastily hiding the slate, she rose to meet her visit r.

He was very pale, and something in his glance made her aware that his call was of no ordinary intent.

"Where is Viola?" he asked, abruptly.

"She has gone to the street with a friend. She will return soon."

"I am glad you are alone; I want to talk with you. I don't like the condition of mind Viola is in to-day. The coming of this Eastern professor seems to have stirred her to another fit of restless desire to go away. I can't think of this, Julia; she is too precious to me to lose. She has become a part of my very heart's blood, and I am afraid to let her go out of my sight. She is young and very impressionable. If she goes away

into the city we may both lose her forever. The time has come to tell you that I love her—not precisely as I loved Adele, but deeply, passionately. I want her as my wife. I ask your consent to tell her so—to-night. Will you give that permission?"

Mrs. Lambert gazed up at him with such fixity of surprise that the rush of his forthright appeal weakened towards its end. She was overwhelmed by the intensity of passion in his voice, as well as by surprise that he, so soon after his bitter loss, could turn to another—to her daughter, a child. And, at last, she whispered, "What will *they* say, Anthony?"

This question he had anticipated, and his reply was ready. "*They* will advise it, I am sure. For does it not fit to their purpose? Does not my great book depend on Viola's daily co-operation? I have no fear of *their* answer; I fear what she will say." He began to pace up and down the room. "What, from *their* point of view, does her musical education signify? Think of it! She holds the key to the gates of death. On her the hopes of millions hang. She is the most wonderful organism in this world — so normal in all other ways, so trustworthy. She will convince all who come into her presence; and then, have not her 'controls' chosen me to publish their discoveries to the world? It is ordained that we work together in this way. She must not go to New York, that vast caldron which destroys all that is spiritual. She should go only when closely guarded by those who love her and understand her exquisite nature, her gifts. Some

day I will take her there. Alone she will be prevented from her grand mission, her message lost, her faith destroyed. Can't you see she must not go?"

"I have done my best to keep her."

"I know you have," he answered, quickly; "and now you must give me authority over her—the authority of a husband. I am willing to put the whole matter to the test this night. She knows that I love her, and I think she honors and respects me—perhaps she may already love me, unworthy as I am."

The mother began now to tremble. "I don't know, Anthony; she thought — we all understood — that you—"

"I know what you mean," he irritably exclaimed. "Why will you persist in misreading me? I am not disloyal to Adele. Can't you see that my devotion for her remains, and that my regard for Viola is no treason to the dead? Adele will understand how vital, how necessary, Viola is to me, for does she not know that I could not even communicate with her if Viola went away? I do not love Viola as a boy loves, but as a man who understands himself and her—as one who understands her duties. It is a different love, but it is just as true, and it is high and holy. Without her I would have gone mad. She saved me from despair. Her union with me will make her an evangel to the earth-bound millions."

Flattered as well as awed by this disclosure of her daughter's power, the mother consented to his demand. Marriage with him would safe-harbor Viola,

would establish her in life, and would also carry forward the work which she, too, considered of greater importance than any other concern of her life.

"I don't know her mind, Anthony," she said, after a silence. "She worries and puzzles me lately by her opposition to all our plans; but I don't think she is attached to any of the young men she knows. Still, she is not one to speak of such things. And if she consents—"

"When she comes, leave her to me," answered he, with returning confidence. Deep in the man's egotistic soul lay the thought, "I know why this girl is restless and uneasy—I know why she seeks afar off; it is because she thinks me indissolubly bound to Adele. When she finds that I love her, that I want her for my wife, she will come—her vague rebellions will cease. Her longings will close round me—"

When the door opened and Viola stepped into the room, so tall, so vivid, so tingling with life, the very force of his desire rendered Clarke outwardly humble, drove him to a feigning of sadness and to the voicing of desolate weakness. After the mother left them alone he began speaking in a low voice with deep-dropping cadences.

"Viola, I have something important to say to you. I am much disturbed over your renewed determination to go away. In the face of the great work which is yours to do I do not understand how you can think of dropping it in mid-air, so to speak, to go away on an errand which is essentially selfish — as well as most

unwise and full of danger. I don't understand this renewal of restlessness on your part."

The girl's face was clouded, for she had just learned of Serviss's departure and was deeply hurt. She drew the pin from her hat and silently laid it on the table, and in this gesture was something of the resolution of the warrior who divests himself of his cumbering plumed helmet. "It's very simple," she curtly answered. "I want to get away from here for a while. I can't endure my life here any longer."

"Why not? Why are you so unhappy?" he asked, with an accent of stern reproof. "It is a beautiful land—you are among your own people, you have your music, your work, and you are young. You ought to be happy."

"That's just it," she interrupted, quite fiercely. "It is because I am young that I want to do something. It seems to me to-day as if I were losing the best years of my life here in this little town, and I want to get away. I *must* get away!"

"Does your work with me seem of no value?" His glowing eyes sought hers. He approached her. "Do I weary you? Am I an irritation?"

Her face softened. "No, you have helped me very much. I couldn't have endured this life without you and my music; but this other life—these sittings—I can't go on with them."

"Don't you feel that you must? Don't you feel their enormous importance?"

"No, I don't! I begin to doubt myself—every-

body. What have *they* done for you, for anybody, that I should sacrifice my whole life to them and their wishes?"

"They brought me healing; they made Dr. Randall happy in his last years; they are a daily solace to your mother; they will comfort millions through our agency." He bent towards her. "Viola, my girl, God has designed for you and me a closer union than even this. You say I have comforted you, that I have made life happier for you. I have come to-night to tell you that I love you, and that I want you to be my wife."

The girl recoiled from the touch of his hand, uttering a low cry of surprise, of question.

He went on: "Yes, I have grown to care for you beyond any other human being. You are my staff, my stay. God sent you to my spiritual healing. I should have gone mad but for you." He bent upon her a look of passion and command. "You must not think of going away. You belong to me." Her face warned him that his appeal was being misinterpreted, and he added, quickly: "I know this comes to you abruptly, and yet you must have felt my love, you must have read my heart."

"Not in that way," she answered, in a low voice. "I thought you—I always understood—" The memory of his professed suffering, his oft-expressed adoration for the dead Adele, checked her, filled her with a storm of doubt, and she could not finish her accusation.

He caught up the thread she dropped. "I *did* love Adele, I love her still—a holy, mysterious love—a love

you cannot understand; my feeling for you is different, but no less high. It is the cry of a lonely, desolate man. Come to me, Viola; do not question; follow your heart's leadings, as I do." The light of her accusing young eyes pierced the armor of his defence, and he fell upon his knees before her. "I can't explain it, but it is true, Viola. I have not deceived you. I loved her — I love her still. She is vital in my life. I was sincere in all I said; but you are flesh and she is spirit. Don't you see? You can comfort me—assist me, work with me as she cannot."

As he poured out his passionate plea, a sense of injury, of disillusionment, overran the girl. She revolted from the touch of his head against her knee. "You must not talk to me that way—you belong to her." She pushed him away. "Get up. Go away from me. I hate you now."

There was something so final, so convicting in her gesture of repulsion that the man's head dropped. He covered his face and uttered a groaning cry, and so lay silently sobbing, while she looked down at him—woman-grown in that instant. His passion moved her to pity, not to love, and she put him aside gently and left the room without further word. Her master, her highest earthly guide, had fallen from his lofty place and lay grovelling at her feet. This conception, vague but massive, oppressed her heart, and lay upon her brain like a leaden cap.

At the moment she, too, despaired of life and knew not where to turn for aid.

BOOK II

I

THE MODERNISTS

THE Bacteriologic Department of the Corlear Medical School stood at this time on one of the cross-streets of the old East Side, not far from Corlear Park. It was a large, old-fashioned brick building, worn of threshold, and as ugly in line as a livery barn. Its entrance was merely a gap in the wall, its windows rectangular openings to let in the light. Not one touch of color or grace, not one dignified line could be detected throughout its whole exterior. It was constructed for use, not ornament.

Interiorly it was quite as utilitarian. Its halls, bare and cheerless, echoed to the tread and were repellent as those of a barracks. The visitor felt chilled, disappointed, as if he had been met by the insolent servant of an indifferent hostess. It seemed the home of the mathematical, the mechanical, the material; but this was a mistake. It was a house of dreams. The right knock at one of those ugly doors would permit one to step into the presence of the most cheery, the most learned, the most imaginative of individuals—the man of germs, poet, dreamer, and experimentalist, absorbed in the pursuit of the unattainable, concerned with

the ultimate structure of organic life, baffled, yet toiling on for love of his work, while the sick of the world believe in him as an angel of altruism.

The far-away rivers of the world have all been traversed and mapped, but the streams of blood in the arteries of man are filled with the unknown. The habits of the Esquimaux, the customs of the dwarfs of Central Africa, the ways of the baboons of Sumatra are minutely set to book, but the wars of the phagocytes remain indeterminate, unexplained. With microscope to his eye the bacteriologist is now examining the constituent parts of the blood, isolating, breeding, and minutely studying the germs of fevers, the growths of tumors, and other elemental forms of human parasites, in order to discover their antagonisms, their likings; for in these jungles of the flesh the war of races proceeds quite as in the Amazonian forests—the white cells against the red, devouring, destroying.

The men behind these bald, bleak doors are tireless workers as well as seers and sages. They toil (at ridiculously low salaries) in the avowed hope of eradicating diseases. They do not pause in dismay of the insoluble. They—or such as they—discovered the cure for small-pox, for hydrophobia, diphtheria, and for yellow-fever. They and their like brought chloroform to the woman in travail, and ether to the wounded soldier. They have enormously reduced the number of those who die on the battle-field by their antiseptic dressings, and by one discovery after another have made infantile diseases less destructive. They already

control yellow-fever and are about to eradicate typhoid —yet they say "our work is but begun."

Here one comes upon their dreams. Calm and contained as their words are, their hearts are aflame with passion for the undiscovered. They are akin to those who seek the theoretic poles of the earth, undaunted by endless defeats. With quickening breath they watch the electrons flame and fall, seeing the ultimate constitution of matter almost within their grasp, and yet they do not permit their dreams to blind or weaken them in their wearisome, hopeless quest.

They have their heroism for humanity, too. They meet death face to face, as they pry close into the cause of decay, the secret of morbid growth. There is more danger in certain germs than in lions. Blood-poisoning is to the surgeon a more constant menace than hunger to an Arctic explorer. These students never know what destroyer they may unwittingly unloose. Cross-section of abnormal tissue is more entrancing than a rose-leaf, a cluster of bacilli more beautiful than a snowflake. They have gone past all creeds, these calm young men, but they bow before the unspeakable majesty of the unknown. To them the Hebrew Scriptures are but the tales of minstrels in the childhood of the race, Mohammed a dreamer of baseless visions, and Christ but incarnate love in an age of war. The Creator they conceive is too profound to admit of any attribute. He neither thinks nor feels, and the life that pulses at the base of the first faint

cell is a part of the same power that binds the stars to their circling suns.

Notwithstanding their daily contact with the most appalling cases of disease and death, they come and go briskly with jocular greetings on the stair-ways. They return to their homes each night to read, to smoke their pipes, deporting themselves like commonplace fathers and brothers and husbands. They even make love like other men; but, nevertheless, they may be overtaken in muse like alchemists, subject to fear and hope like children. To the business-man their ways are ways of silence and sorcery. Their deep-hid convictions are at variance with all theories of Christian redemption, and the realities of their realm more startling than any romance of war or peace. To them matter is as insoluble as the transforming forces which emanate from it. They play with nerves, laying bare the beating heart of life, forever finding, yet forever failing.

To this big, bare building, to one of these barren rooms, Morton Serviss returned after eight weeks study of the sands and the stars and the cave-dwellings of vanished men. From the infinitely lonely and huge and beautiful he cloistered himself to pore upon the habits of the infinitely small, to listen to the swarming, diminished tumult of the protozoa. He came back, as usual, brown, alert, and keen-eyed—eager for work, confident of some new victory, for he was an investigator of weight and standing among the younger men of science. On the street he was in-

distinguishable from other debonair young men of good social position; in his laboratory he was a master, absorbed, reticent, and precise of plan.

His chief, a little, gray, bent, brusque German, greeted him with absent-minded smile, remarked briefly upon his good health, and then they set to work. In thirty seconds he had forgotten the desert, the face of Viola, all his energies concentrated on the segment of cancer beneath his eye. A newly developed germ, a thousandth part the stature of a gnat's toe, shut out the valley of the Colorow. All day he moved among a wilderness of tubes, jars, and copper ovens, peering, observing—and in a sense happy.

But at night, when alone with his pipe in his study, the lavender sands, the violet peaks, the vivid saffron skies returned with power. Viola, too, came back to bewitch him from his reading, to make his microscopic world of shadowy substance and the smell of his laboratory a hateful thing.

He heard nothing further of her. Britt wrote once or twice, but did not allude to either Clarke or the Lamberts, and Serviss did not care to ask particularly about them. It was better for him not to be concerned further with the girl's singular history. He hated the irregular, the pretentious. His own life, so clear, so well regulated, made her daily performances the more monstrous. The whole had become so foolish in retrospect that he refrained from speaking of it, even to his sister.

It was not quite true that he saw little of New York,

for his sister, Mrs. Rice—a widow with two children—who kept his house, or, rather, his double flat, was a social soul, and not merely went about freely, but entertained regularly. They lived handsomely, and the world in which they moved was crowded with duties as well as with sane pleasures. They entertained at their table artists from Paris, savans from Berlin, and literary lesser lights from London, and they enjoyed all this, envying the richer and more ostentatious families of the city as little as they despised the poor of Hester Street. The one quality which they insisted upon in their guests was intellectual cleverness. Perhaps they were a little severe on bores.

Their ways were quite as remote from the so-called captains of industry as from the farmers of Jersey, and the roar of Broad Street was so far away it reached them but as the hum of hornets outside their window-pane. To the explorer of Tibet this life was narrow. To the gay dinner-parties of upper Fifth Avenue it would have seemed dull. To the wrecker of railroads on Wall Street it was indubitably petty. To the merchant it was unprofitable, and yet they were quite content with it, and looked out upon the bustling throngs of fashion and the hustling world of business with equal word of good-natured contempt.

"We can't all be biologists," Serviss was accustomed to say, "and I suppose somebody must continue to steal and murder."

They came of good stock, these Servisses, and knew it and felt it. Breeding was indicated in their well-set

heads, in their shapely hands, and especially in their handsome noses. "We are inclined to be stubby, that's true, but we have the noses of aristocrats—they go back to the Aryans of the Danube," said Mrs. Rice to a friend. "Morton cannot consider a girl of questionable pedigree, no matter how rich or charming she may be. We believe in stock—not in family, but *strain*; a family is an accident, a strain is a formation. The Mortons and the Servisses are *strains*. Their union in my brother will yet make itself felt." Her confidence in his powers was absolute. "He is one of the greatest young men of his day. Time will show," she added, as if to clinch her argument.

The circle of their acquaintance included, first of all—and of course—the scientific group, then in successive widening waves the general literary and educational fraternities, the artistic and musical sets, and finally they kept in touch with the old New York families, their own school-mates and friends and those related. All the details and duties of the social side of his life Morton turned over to Kate, and such was her tact, and her skill and charm as hostess, that her rooms of a Tuesday afternoon were filled with a company of men and women as cheerful and as informal as they were clever and distinguished. Among these groups Serviss moved as detached of all responsibility as any of his guests, finding in this contact with bright minds one of the greatest pleasures of his life.

These various circles moved afar from isms. They prided themselves on their balance, their common-

sense, their fund of comparative ideas. True, some of the women had embraced Christian Science more or less openly, but they did not esteem it necessary to proselyte. Political creeds were but jocularly discussed. To advocate any special belief was to prick one's self down a bore, although some of those in the strictly university circles did at times become troublesomely learned in conversation. However, this was esteemed "old fogyism" by the younger men like Serviss, who alluded to "the days of the professional monologue" with smiling contempt. Conversation with them was a means of diversion, not of enlightenment as to any special subject.

Into these circles a thorough-going spiritualist never penetrated. To tell the truth, these modernists did not permit the hereafter to awe or affright them. Some of them went to church, but they did so calmly, patiently, as to a decorous function, and some may at times have prayed, through the medium of printed supplication, but, generally speaking, they had reached a sort of philosophic indifference as to the one-time burning question of heaven or hell. So far from acquiescing in the dictum that morality was but filthy rags, they esteemed good deeds and clean thoughts higher than any religion whatsoever.

Mrs. Rice expressed the convictions of many of her associates by saying, humorously: "No, I don't want to be saved. I'm not lost. I don't know as I care for immortality. Forever is a long time—I might get bored; anyhow, the future must take care of itself."

In all the drawing-rooms of his friends, Morton Serviss

was a most welcome guest. His frank, boyish ways, his careless dress, his freedom from cant, his essential good-fellowship deceived the most of his acquaintances into thinking him a mere dabbler in science, a man of wealth amusing himself; but Weissmann, who was qualified to know, said: "He has persistency, concentration, a keen mind, a clear eye, and a *voonderful* physique."

He belonged, moreover, to the men of imagination, not to those who write books or poems, but to those who tunnel mountains, build vast bridges, invent new motors, and play with electrical currents as if they were ribbons. The novelist basing himself on what he knows of human nature projects himself into the unknown, just as the scientist who stands on the discoveries of those before him feels out into the darkness for new stars, new forces. And yet as Clarke and his party indignantly declared, "both novelist and scientist ignore the question most vital to us all—the question of the soul's survival after death"—ignore it till some loved one dies, then they, too, agonize in secret over the mystery for a space, only to rise and go back to their work, concealing the conviction which their hour of anguish brought to them.

Perhaps it was not chance, but deep design, which had brought this vigorous young investigator face to face with a mystery crying out for solution—certainly it was not without craft that the unseen powers had baited their hook with the almost irresistible allurement of a young and ardent girl. If there is logic in the shadow, fate was on Viola's side.

II

NEWS OF VIOLA

ONE morning in late March, while Serviss was still at his morning's mail, Dr. Britt's card came in, bringing with it instant, vivid recollection of Colorow. The beauty of his days there had by no means faded from his mind, although he had succeeded in putting his romance in the background of his working brain, and had given up all thought of ever seeing Viola again.

He greeted Britt most cordially. "So you turned up at last! How is the lung? Isn't this a raw time of the year for you?"

"Well, yes; but my father died a few days ago, and I had to come on, and being near I ran in to see how you and the 'bugs' were getting on."

"Oh, we're thriving. Their ways are quite absorbing. How is your own 'farm'?"

"All in ruins. The fact is I've neglected the poor little brutes. I had no time for germs after I went off into the study of 'spooks.'"

"You don't tell me you've turned investigator of spirits! What have you discovered?"

"Not a thing. It's the most elusive problem I ever tackled. You remember the Lamberts?"

"Very well. I was about to ask about them."

"They're here now."

"Here! In New York?"

"Yes. They went to Boston last fall—Boston is a hot-bed of spookism, as you may know. They spent the winter there among the brethren, and have come on here for a change."

"They'll get it. What is—the girl doing?"

"Spooking mainly. That's all her 'guides' will allow her to do. Clarke still dominates the household by the aid of the ghostly granddaddy—a grim old chap that. They hold regular 'séances' now."

"You don't mean it!" Serviss grew graver yet of countenance. "I had hoped they would spare her that humiliation. I haven't seen her name in the papers."

"Oh, they don't go quite so far as that. The circles are 'very select.' Only the priests of the faith and their friends are invited—no admission fee—you understand?"

"I'm glad of that. It would be too bad to put that child forward in the double rôle of fakir and money-breeder; but, tell me, have you any fresh light on the subject of her mediumship?"

"Well, yes. I've changed my point of view slightly. I'm inclined to think there is pretty generally some basis for the faith. The literature of the subject is immense, and some of it is as well authenticated as any physical treatise. I'm convinced that Miss Lambert has no intent to deceive—she has no possible

motive to do so—but Clarke has, and yet I cannot connect him directly with the phenomena."

"How is her health?"

"Very good, apparently. She is quite as blooming as when you saw her, and is immensely more mature mentally."

"Is she resigned to her life?"

"Sometimes she is and sometimes not. She is very sensitive to influences, and at times when Clarke is near she grows almost as enthusiastic as he—at other times she bitterly complains. I tried to free her from Clarke, but she wouldn't give me the authority necessary."

"What do you mean by that?"

There was something both sad and mocking in Britt's face as he answered: "I offered to marry her—wasn't that generous of me? She spurned my humble offer, intimating that there was small choice between me and Clarke and the spooks. No, I'll be honest, she was very nice and kind about it, and added that perhaps Mr. Clarke was right—her duty in the world was to 'convince people of the reality of the forces,' or something like that. 'I shall never marry,' she added, to soften the blow, and really she does seem a person set apart."

Serviss looked down at his book. "I suppose she imagines herself stricken with a mortal illness. I confess I sometimes think of her in that way. I can't understand why her parents—" He checked himself. "Where are they stopping?"

"They're housed over near the Riverside Drive

with a wild enthusiast who has oodles and wads of money—old Simeon Pratt."

"I've heard of Simeon—Uncle Simeon the reporters call him on 'the Street.' I remember now about his spiritualism. He had some remarkable experiences after his wife's death—drowned, wasn't she?"

"You can't afford to be indefinite about Simeon's sorrows, doctor, for they made him what he is. I find these believers all start in about the same way. Simeon's wife and two daughters were lost in the English Channel. Simeon became a believer the following Monday—or maybe it was Tuesday."

"I recall the story of his life now. It was all very tragic. I wonder he didn't become a maniac."

"Some people think he did," answered Britt, dryly.

"So they're with Simeon. He lives gorgeously, I'm told."

"About like a lone American guest in a twenty-franc-per-day hotel in Paris. Why, yes, they're very comfortable there—all but the girl. She's discontented and unhappy, if I'm any judge, and is besieged day and night by the mourning faithful, not to speak of certain amorous males."

This hurt, and Serviss shifted ground. "Does she keep up her music?"

Again Britt smiled, but not humorously. "She plays the harp—in the dark."

"You mean—"

"She's taken on a lot more of the regulation tricks—

materializing flowers, slate-writing, music without hands, etc."

"You don't mean it! I can hardly associate such doings with her," sorrow and indignation mingled in his voice.

"I assure you I was there last night at a 'circle,' and these things took place with Clarke as ring-master. There wasn't a particle of originality—it was the same old mill, and the same old grist, yet I don't hold her responsible in any harmful degree. I can't believe she designedly tricks, but she's surrounded now by a gang of chattering, soft-pated women, and men with bats in their belfry, who unite in assuring her that her God-given powers must be fostered. They've cut her off from any decent marriage—she's virtually a prisoner to their whims. What they may induce her to do next I don't know. I'm going to hang round here for a week or two and see." A violent fit of coughing interrupted him. When he recovered he looked up sidewise. "Isn't this a peach of a climate? Wouldn't you think they'd build at least one of their big cities where microbes couldn't fatten on genius?"

"What led Clarke to consent to leaving the West? When I was there he bitterly opposed her going."

"Oh, it's very simple. He has written a book on *The Physical Proof of Immortality*, and, being anxious for a publisher, withdrew his opposition to her plan, and declared himself willing to go to Boston—at Lambert's expense."

"Is he out of the Church?"

"Absolutely. You should have heard his farewell sermon. It really was as dramatic a speech as I ever heard. He went on to declare that the Hebrews were not the only seers, that the wells of inspiration were not yet dry, that revelation was waiting upon every soul to-day, and that he had been led by sorrow to listen at the key-hole, and so on. I trembled for the girl's secret, but he had himself in hand, and did not betray her. No one out there knows for certain what her abnormalities are."

"How about Lambert? Why didn't he take a hand?"

"He seemed bewildered by it all, and overawed by Clarke and the girl's 'controls.' 'It's all above timber-line for me,' he said, but he didn't like their coming away a little bit. He was angry with Clarke for breaking up his home, and if the girl had been his own I think he would have stopped the business long ago. Then there was a young fellow, Clinton Ward, who was working for Lambert, a fine young fellow—"

"I remember him."

"Well, it seems that his father is a partner in a publishing firm in Boston, and Clarke tried to make use of him to get his book published, and I believe his firm is to take it. Meanwhile the young fellow is in love with Viola, and willing to marry her and take chances, but his family is very properly aghast. Viola, knowing this—or for some other reason—refuses him. And there you are! The girl seems cursed on all sides,

and, worst of all, has to endure Clarke and his ravings twelve hours of every mortal day."

"What is her relation to Clarke?" asked Serviss, hesitatingly.

"Well, now, I don't know. Sometimes I think he controls her by some infernal hypnotic power; and then again, from some phrase of her own, I think she considers her mind diseased, and marriage with any one else impossible."

"I don't see how the mother can stand by and see her daughter's life burned away."

"She, in her turn, seems enslaved to the dead. She has often told me that her father's spirit is leading her every movement."

"That particular ghost is Clarke—don't you think?"

Britt's eyes narrowed. "I don't know. I have never been able to connect him directly with a single one of these manifestations, and yet he must be at the bottom of part of it."

"It all comes back, then, to the girl herself."

Britt rose uneasily. "I repeat I am completely at sea. I have studied every line of old Randall's notes till I'm 'dopy' myself. Everything has conspired to make the girl hysterical—to fasten some accursed mental weakness upon her. If I could have stopped it two years ago she might have outgrown it. Every year now makes it less easy for her to shake it off—whatever it is."

"Atrocious!" exclaimed Serviss. "Has no one authority to act?"

Britt shrugged his shoulders. "What would you do when both parents—the living and the dead—consent? Only a husband could intervene, and Clarke seems to be about to claim that place. No, I see no hope for the girl. She may be right, after all, in joining Clarke."

Serviss rose to release the emotional tension under which he had kept his limbs. "You don't know their present plans?"

"No, only that Clarke is going to publish soon." He looked round the room. "What a development since my time! Bacteriology and auto-transportation are neck and neck in their amazing expansion."

Thereupon they dropped all reference to the Lamberts and their trials, and turned their minds upon phagocytes and other ravening mites whose likes and dislikes, minute as they are, work more devastation than cannon.

Serviss's work was over for that day; after Britt went away he sat idly at his desk, his mind busy with the revolting pictures called up by what he had heard of Viola. "They are destroying a beautiful soul," he exclaimed, bitterly, as he recalled the charm of her face and voice on that ride to the mine. "They are forcing a charming girl into an abominable life, they are warping her moral fibre into ugliness and death—and Clarke is the fanatic devil of the scheme."

The desire to see her, to talk with her, to measure the change in her grew very strong—so strong that he meditated a call, but the thought of Clarke cut the

resolution off before it was fully formed. "Probably Britt is right—Clarke's rotten soul has fatally infected hers."

When Weissmann came in Serviss turned to him and said: "Doctor, I want to ask you a very unusual question."

"Proceed," replied the old man, who spoke with a little touch of the German now and then.

"What do you think of the claims of spiritualism?"

Weissmann did not smile as Serviss had expected. He became grave. "I am not qualified to judge. Speaking generally, I would say there are many phases to be considered. There are some millions of people who believe in it—which would argue some small basis of truth to start with. On the other hand, the extraordinary credulity of these people is to be taken into account."

"You mean they are those bereaved and anxious to believe?"

"Precisely. Again, speaking generally, I find few things impossible in this world of mystery. To take an old metaphor, I would not be surprised to find a grain of wheat in all this bushel of chaff. Every genuine phenomenon in the world stands related to every other phenomenon, and I believe that the truth or falsity of the spiritualistic hypothesis can be determined in accordance with physical science. If I were young and strong like you I would devote myself to the study of this delusion. It should be studied by one like yourself—to whom death is no near pres-

ence; as for me, I have two sons and one wife dead; my judgment would be vitiated therewith. You have no dead; you would make an admirable student of these spirit-voices and signs."

Serviss, though a little awed by the old man's unexpectedly solemn manner, ventured further. "Have you ever witnessed any of these unaccountable doings which Crookes and Zöllner instance?"

"I have had them in my own chamber." The old man's eyes twinkled. "Once, as I was dozing on my bed, one morning early, a faint cloud, like a puff of smoke, began to form above my head. It became pendulous, reaching towards me, and out of it a hand developed and extended. I said: 'It is an hallucination—very curious! I will touch it and it will vanish.' I reached—I grasped the hand—*it was warm and solid!* I leaped from my bed with a yell." He chuckled at his keenly remembered discomfiture.

"How do you account for it? It was an illusion, of course. You thought the illusion only ocular—it extended to the sense of touch."

Weissmann's eyes gleamed speculatively. "We will let it go so. The world of sense and the world of spirit curiously intermingle—as we know."

"But these manifestations, so far as I have any knowledge, are so foolish and childish—"

"Well, so many foolish and childish persons have gone to the other world. Death is not the beginning of wisdom. I am an old man, Serviss, and already many of my loved ones are dead. I should like to

believe they are still sentient, and maybe they are. I am German. The blood of Kant is in my veins." He seemed to be speaking partly to himself. "I do not dogmatize so gladly as I once did. As I do not know the essence of matter, it would be folly for me to assume to fathom the depth of spirit. The essential hopelessness of science is coming to render me humble. Spiritualism certainly is a comfortable belief. I would gladly embrace it if I could. I suspend judgment. This desire for another life may be only a survival of a more unreasoning time, something we will outgrow."

Serviss was profoundly surprised by his chief's attitude. He had expected a large, calm, and rather contemptuous reply to his question. In place of decision he encountered a doubt, a hesitancy, which betrayed weakness. Rudolph Weissmann, great as he was, belonged to the innumerable throng of the bereaved whose judgments are clouded by passion. He, too, was growing old, his all-embracing mind had yielded to an hallucination.

The young man's respect for his chief did not diminish, but a feeling of sadness swept over him as he realized that another renowned and fearless investigator was nearing the end of his great usefulness, and that upon the clear blue steel of his intelligence the rust of age had begun to fall. Truly the power of his early training, his worship of Kant and his school was still vital.

Then he pondered his words. "If I were a young

man like you I would investigate this thing," and recalled that no young man of science had ever devoted himself to it. "They all came to it late in life, after bereavement."

The bereaved! The whole stupendous delusion seemed to rest upon the overmastering desire of the bereaved for their beloved. The great and good men and women among the believers (he was willing to admit there were such) came to investigation weakened by sorrow, made illogical by loss. They put their sane judgment, their strength, their calm patience aside and grasped eagerly at the lying comfort extended to them. They were not merely deceived, they developed fraud by their blindness, by their hunger for consolation, and by their crass credulity. He was still young enough to have inexorable theories—to be of single-hearted loyalty to his creed. To him as a monist, the soul (as an entity apart from the body) did not exist. Consciousness was a physical disturbance of the higher nerve centres, and thought a secretion of the brain. He acknowledged no line of demarcation between the crystal and the monera—and no chasm (of course) between man and the animals. The universe was a unit—and all its forms and forces differentiations of one substance and that substance too mysterious to be analyzed or named. In such a philosophy as this there could be no room for any hypothesis which even so much as squinted towards dualism, or that permitted a conception so childish as the persistence of the individuality after death.

However, he did not carry his implacable principles into the homes of his friends, and seldom permitted them to interfere with his enjoyment of wines or good dinners, the theatre or the drawing-room. This fact, from a cynical point of view, proved his faith to have been as truly of his laboratory as that of a bishop, with Spencer and Darwin and Koch and Haeckel as the founders of its articles.

He went home that night with the words of both Weissmann and Britt intermingling in his mind, strongly tempted to tell Viola's story to his sister, and so enlist her sympathy for the poor girl.

But it happened that an engagement to dine filled Kate's mind, and he had no time to open the subject till they were on the way, and by that time he had concluded not to involve her in his perplexity.

By a curious coincidence one of the guests at the dinner brought a hush of expectancy over the entire company by relating a series of experiences he had been privileged to share with a "psychic" some years before. He told of his mystification with a laugh in his eyes and with racy vigor of tongue, but Serviss, newly alive to the topic, could not but marvel at the intensity of interest manifested by every soul present. "Disguise it as we may," said the narrator, "this question of the life beyond the grave is chief of all our problems. It is the sovereign mystery, after all."

At this the hostess spoke: "I wish *we* could see some of these things. You make us shudder deliciously. Can't you sometime bring this remark-

able young woman — they're always women, aren't they?"

"Oh no," laughingly replied the young fellow. "One of the most amusing 'stunts' I ever saw was that of a man in Washington, who made a banjo play behind a curtain while holding both your hands."

"Why *do* the spirits do such foolish things? I should think they'd be ashamed to act so 'frivolous like.'"

"They always talk like Indians, don't they? It's a pity. Why aren't they dignified and sincere?"

The young story-teller went on. "That's just it. The mediums are so nonchalant while causing these marvels that they fail to convince. Why, when I was holding a slate in order that they might write upon it, I minded the scratching no more than a clock a-ticking, they had made me that careless of their hocus-pocus. A voice in my ear can't make me start, and nothing, absolutely nothing, can now 'rouse my fell of hair.' You put a potato in the ashes of the hearth and it will ultimately pop into something to eat. You put a medium in a dark place and she will set your soul's nerves a-tingle."

Under all this banter Serviss perceived the pulse of an interest which laid hold on the most secret hopes and fears of the youngest and shook the eldest with an elemental dread and longing. It was as if the flood-gates of a sea of doubt and wonder had been turned in upon a dozen minds hitherto as well kept as lawns. Questions popped like corks and answers were as vi-

vacious as the gurgle of wine, but the topic remained indeterminate—the argument inconclusive.

On their way home, Serviss said to his sister: "Did you notice how profound the silence became when Ralph started that discussion of the occult?"

"It is always so."

"Is it, really? I hadn't noticed it particularly."

"That's because people are afraid to talk such things before you scientists. Why, every woman there has been to a palmist or mind-reader or something."

"You astonish me. Have you?"

"Of course! I go every little while just for fun. We all pretend that we don't believe in it, but we do. I'm scared blue every time I go to a new one—they're all such creepy creatures. The last one I went to was positively weird."

Serviss was severe. "Kate, I am ashamed of you. To think that you, a woman of penetration, associating with people of rare intelligence like myself—"

"But why don't you people of rare intelligence look into these things? Why do you leave us poor untrained emotional creatures to suffer befoolment when you could so easily instruct us and shield us?"

"Because, while we could easily prove you befooled, you would still follow after your saw-dust idols. We prefer to save you from your *bodily* infirmities and contagions, and so react on your minds."

She laughed. "That's very clever of you, and very decent. Stay with your germs, rob us of our diseases, but leave us, oh, leave us our delicious *thrills!*" She

became grave. "The fact is, Morton, we all have moments when we feel the presence of the dead. I do. Father and mother never seem away off in our Graceland vault; sometimes they seem to be in the room with me. It's all a fancy, you'll say, and very foolish, but I believe mother actually comes to help me with Georgie when he is ill. Sometimes in the deep of the night I thrill as if she touched me."

He was not unsympathetic as he said: "You never hinted at this before."

"I was afraid to do so. If mother exists somewhere, and in some etherealized form, why can't she come back? Why couldn't her mind act on mine and produce the sensation of her presence?"

"Perhaps it could. Only there is no proof of its ever happening."

"Now see here, Morton, so long as we are on this subject at last, I want to ask you, do you believe mother is gone—absolutely blotted out of existence?" She waited in tense silence, and as they passed a street-lamp, and the light fell on his face, he seemed to have grown suddenly pale. "Do you believe Darwin and Spencer and Victor Hugo have gone to nothingness?"

"No, at the bottom of my heart I can't think that, and yet theoretically I cannot conceive of the existence of any soul apart from the body. Think of it! If mother lives, so do all the billions of cannibals, negroes, Bushmen—you can't draw a line and say 'here begins the immortal souls.'"

"That isn't the question. I do not believe that father and mother and Hayward have vanished into a handful of dust. I cling to a belief in their living selves, not because the bishop and the prayer-books say so, but just because my own mind says so. I won't surrender them, that's all."

"And yet a faith springing from such a desire is not well based. I want to tell you about some people I met last summer. They will interest you." Thereupon he pictured his first meeting with Viola. He described the mother and Clarke. He told of his interview with Britt and of Randall's revelations concerning Viola's life. "And now they have convinced the girl that she should extend her sphere of influence and bring her chicanery to bear on the metropolis."

"How do you know it is chicanery?"

"Britt said—"

"I don't care what Britt said. You found the mother sweet, and you admit the girl is charming. I'll trust your instinct in such matters, Mort; you've never been one to run after frumps and minxes. She had good eyes?"

"Beautiful eyes, steady, blue-gray, wistful. She quite enchanted me at first—"

"And you're sentimental over her still?"

"I didn't say that I was sentimental over her at any time."

"I don't care what you said. I can tell by your voice that she is a lost, sweet dream. What do you want me to do?"

"Nothing."

"Yes, you do. You want me to see her and find out what she's doing here. It is Kate to the rescue! I will go to-morrow."

"You are too precipitate! You might wait and get my mind."

"I have your mind already, and I believe in doing things vigorously. Besides, you've roused my curiosity. After all these years of waiting to see you get interested in something besides your 'bugs'!—I'm delighted to know you're human, and that there is one woman in the world who can make you moan. You are hit—don't deny it! You've been brooding on that girl all this time. I've known you were hit, but I thought I would wait till you cared to speak. I'm crazy to see her. I shall act at once."

"It's too much to ask of you, but I hope you will consider me to the extent—"

"If your theory is correct that girl ought to be snatched away before the mob of occultists, freaks, and flatterers of this city utterly spoil her. Anyhow, I'm going to look into her case on my own account." And in this determination she snuggled into the corner of the carriage and became silent.

Serviss found that sharing his experience with his sister had enormously increased the weight and importance of his doubt. Viola and her singular beleaguerment had suddenly grown to be a vital problem—something to be immediately seized upon, and he casually added: "It is only fair to say that the

Lamberts are above the need of taking money for any display of 'psychic force.'"

Suddenly Kate sat up. "Suppose the girl really *has* these powers?"

"That is impossible!"

"Why impossible? Do you men of science pretend to know *all* there is to know?"

"Certainly not; but think what such an admission involves."

"No matter *what* it involves. You don't ask what the X-ray involves; you ask, first of all, is it a fact? If the girl has these powers, then what? You don't even know what she claims, do you?"

"Not in detail."

"Well, then, don't condemn her till you know what you're condemning her for."

"Kate, you amaze me. I thought you would commend my cool judgment, my sanity, and lo and behold! as Aunt Celina says, you have become the girl's advocate and the assailant of science."

"Not at all. I merely say you scientific people should not be so insultingly sure that people with a faith are fools."

"We don't say fools—we merely say misinformed."

"Anyhow, you've interested me in this medium—"

"For Heaven's sake, don't call her that if you're going to see her. To apply such a name to that sweet child is an outrage."

Kate's voice was exultant as she cried out: "Now I know you're in love with her."

"Mrs. Rice, you are a very wise woman."

"I hope I shall not find you a very silly scientist," she replied, with several implications of superiority in both words and tone.

III

BRITT COMES TO DINE

HIS sister's blunt words brought Morton face to face with himself. His heart had been touched, his imagination fired by Viola, hence his discontent, his heat of anger towards the unlovely side of her life. It was the memory of her that had kept him half-hearted to the claims of several comely women of his circle whom Kate had advocated.

And now his mind (which ought to have been given up entirely to bacteria) was filled with the face and fortunes of one who was either living a lie or suffering from an abnormally developed brain. Singular and sad predicament for a man who had determined to move slowly and with calm foresight. Furthermore, the whole world in which his love lived and moved was repellent, silly, and morbid. Since his meeting with her he had tried to read some of the journals devoted to her faith, and had found them incredibly inane—smudgily printed, slovenly of phrase, and filled with messages from Aristotle, Columbus, and Confucius, which would have been discouraging in a boy of twelve years old. The phraseology, the cant terms, nauseated him. The advertisements of "Psychics," "World-

famous Mediums," "Palmists," "Horologists," and only the devil himself knows what else, filled him with disgust, added to his already poor opinion of sick humanity. Of these Viola now formed a part—as an actress shares the envy, the brag, the selfish, blatant struggle for success which is reflected in the advertising columns of dramatic journals. He ran down each column of "display ads" of *The World of Spirit*, timorously, almost expecting to see a notice of "the marvellous psychic Miss Viola Lambert, the mountain seeress"—and so on.

On deeper thought he found these papers shrewdly contrived to take human beings at their weakest point, their most unguarded moment: they had the boldness of the juggler who knows the blind spot in the eyes of his spectators. They occupied a field apart from all other periodicals in the world. Science, literature, and art concerned them only so far as they touched upon, illuminated, or strengthened faith in "the farther shore." They were as special as a trade-journal—far more so, indeed, for the *Boot and Shoe News* prints occasional reviews of books, and some admirable stories may be found within its pages side by side with notes on "Burnishers" and stitching-machines.

The accounts of circles, sittings, and "séances"—good Lord, how he hated that word!—were almost comic, and yet to think of Viola and her gracious mother concerned with these meetings, even as spectators, filled him with angry disgust.

According to Britt, the girl was a self-deluded fakir

at the best—at the worst, an habitual, hysterical trickster, avid for notoriety. In either case a tainted, leprous thing—a woman to be shunned by every man who valued a dignified and wholesome life. It was worse than folly to permit such a creature to break in on his work, to draw his mind from his reading; nevertheless she continued to do both these things.

The next morning, as he was leaving the house for his office, he stepped into the dining-room and took a seat by his sister's side.

"Kate," he said, and his voice was stern, "you must not call upon Miss Lambert."

"Why not, Morton?"

"Because it would prove a snare to you and an embarrassment to me. She is a singularly attractive girl. No one can face her and accuse her. Britt says she is much more mature than when I saw her; and by that he meant to convey that she had grown clever, if not tricky. There is a bad streak in her, I'm afraid, for all her charm, and you would better let her entirely alone. Upon the most charitable construction she is hysterical, and her deception probably arises, as Britt says, from a diseased brain. In any case she is not a fit person for you to meet."

"But you said she has good eyes?"

"She has. She is bewitchingly pretty, but that only makes her case the more perplexing. Why trouble ourselves about her?"

"I'm going to call upon her, anyway. I'm not

afraid. I am wild to see a girl who can upset you so completely. You are upset; I can see that."

"Morton laughed, rather sadly. "That's a fine, womanly reason, and may be sufficient for you; but, if you go, understand, Kate, it is against my wish. I do not care to know anything more about her and her problems; she has interfered too much with my work already."

She looked deep into his soul, then took another tack. "Well, then, bring on this man Britt; he's the only witness for the prosecution, isn't he? Let's have him to dinner. I want to interrogate him, as the lawyers say. I want to know what kind of a man he is before I take his word against a girl who rejected him. He may be only jaundiced."

"He was their family physician."

"I don't care if he was, he may be seeking revenge on the girl." She put her arm about his neck. "You poor boy, that girl's troubles have upset you. I'm delighted to find you so humanly romantic—at least I would be if she weren't so questionable. But we'll find out. I'm on her side till I know more of Britt; besides, I'm not sure that her mysterious powers are not real," and she sent him away less keenly concerned. With all her impulse and zeal of friendship she was a woman of sense and power.

Britt came to dinner promptly, gratified for a chance to wear his evening dress. Kate received him gladly, but was taken aback by his languid elegance of manner.

He really looked distinguished, and she rather hastily explained, "Our dinner is only a family affair, Dr. Britt. We wanted to have you all to ourselves."

"Nothing could be better for me, Mrs. Rice, I assure you," he answered, gallantly. "A formal dinner would embarrass me. I've been so long in the hills I feel like a Long Island hermit. It's a far halloo from Colorow to the Bowery."

"It's farther still from the Bowery to Colorow. That's what makes you Western people so interesting to us of the East."

"Please don't make me out an honored son of the West, Mrs. Rice. I was born in New Jersey."

"Were you, indeed? Oh, I'm so sorry."

"I regret it myself. The West would have fitted me out with better lungs."

Kate never went round when she could wade across. Therefore, no sooner were they inhaling the savor of the soup than she began her interrogation. "I am very much interested in occult affairs, Dr. Britt, and my brother tells me you were the family physician of this remarkable Miss Lambert. Tell us about her."

Britt considered a moment. "It is true that Mrs. Lambert confided in me and permitted me to take a part in Viola's sittings; but I can hardly be called her physician. In the first place, the girl seems so perfectly well physically that medicine is unnecessary, and then, too, I never had her confidence. To be plain, I think she hated the sight of me."

"Why was that?"

He cast a curious sidewise glance. "Well, I'm not pretty to look at, and then, I reckon she thought I was investigating her."

"I hope you were."

"I was, but I didn't get very far."

"What barred you?"

"Well, to begin with, pretty nearly everything took place in the dark."

"It's always so," exclaimed Kate. "I wonder why?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "They all say 'light is antagonistic to the power.' You can draw your own inference."

Morton spoke. "I never could understand why they didn't make a special effort to avoid that criticism."

"Well, tell us what happened," cried Kate. "I'm on the edge of my chair with interest."

Britt looked at Morton. "That's the curious thing, isn't it? People *are* interested. The fact is, we all secretly hope the ghost-story may turn out to be true."

Kate laughed. "You're perfectly right. We all pooh-pooh, but we'd be bitterly disappointed if all spirit footsteps turned out to be rats rolling nuts. But please hurry—wasn't *any* of it true?"

"Now, I'm going to be candid—"

At this Morton leaned forward with excess of interest, and Kate exulted. "Good! Now it's coming. Be as candid as you can."

Britt went on musingly. "One night as I sat be-

tween Viola and the closed piano, the spook, or whatever it was, ran up and down the keys—now on the treble, now on the bass — keeping time to my whistling."

Morton interrupted. "Did you *know* that the lid was closed?"

"Yes, I laid my hand on it while the keys were drummed."

"Where was Miss Lambert?"

"Apparently at my left, sleeping. It didn't really matter where she was, for the lid was down. When the lights were turned on she was in deep trance—apparently. That one fact of the closed piano being played in that way remains inexplicable."

"Was that all?" cried Kate, in a most disappointed way.

"Oh no. There were marvels to raise your hair, but that was all that I really valued."

Morton answered quickly. "It was enough, if properly conditioned. The theory is—I've been reading up on it—that these spook brethren of ours attack their doubters in different ways. Knowing you to be a man of materialistic and rather methodical habit of mind, the powers essayed a material test. Perhaps it was a mouse?"

"Or the cat?" suggested Kate.

"They must have been musical and of exceptional intelligence, then," put in Britt, "for they played up and down on the key-board at my request, and kept time to 'Yankee Doodle.'"

Kate exulted. "What do you think of that, Morton? If one is true, then all may be true."

Britt went on. "No. Whatever the power was, it was controlled by human intelligence. It answered to my will."

"You were convinced of that." Morton's glance was keen, keener than he knew. "If you admit that one of these manifestations is true you open the door for the witches."

Britt was a little nettled. "All this took place precisely as I relate it, in the dark, of course. But one sense, that of touch, controlled the situation—hearing took the rest."

"It all shows the inadequacy of human evidence. You must not expect any one to believe that such a manifestation took place. It is like the stories we hear of haunted houses. A friend of mine the other day was telling me of a ghost that frequented an Australian bungalow where he was visiting last year. Said he: 'I saw vases thrown from the mantel-piece in broad daylight. I've heard invisible feet tramping all about my chair in a vividly lighted room.' I didn't believe him, of course. The fact is, we don't know our own capacity for being deceived. We are each a microcosm—a summing-up of all our forebears, and in the obscure places of our brains are the cells of cavemen, nooks troubled by shadows and inhabited by strange noises. If you come at me in the right way you can raise a terrifying echo deep in some knot of my brain-cells; but it is only the echo of a far-away cry—it is not even the cry."

Britt poised himself. "Let me tell you this. I have started in to understand this thing. It isn't a haphazard series of deceits, of that I am at this moment convinced. The most amazing consideration to my mind is this: there is *system* in their fool-tricks. I don't mean Miss Lambert alone, I mean in all the best-authenticated manifestations. As you say, they know how to attack the public; the ones who don't are exposed and drop out; but, generally speaking, they go on smoothly because they know just what can be safely attempted and what can't. Now in Miss Lambert's case the same system appears. Her alleged phenomena fit into the scheme, her development is according to the spiritualistic Hoyle. No originality is permitted, hence no failure of effect."

"And yet my brother tells me she is quite young and engaging."

"Altogether charming in body, and in every other thought most ingenuous."

Morton interposed mockingly. "And you think she has built up this most elaborate system of deceit?"

"Somebody has. I lay a good part of it to Clarke, but most of it to hysteria and the suggestion of *The Flag of Truth* and other similar sheets."

"But she already had all these manifestations before Clarke's coming, and presumably before she read *The Flag of Truth.*"

"They say so. I don't know that. Many of the tricks are noted in Randall's notes."

"Who was Randall?" asked Kate.

"Their family physician—my predecessor. Some of her phenomena convinced him. He put himself on record in his notes as a convert. However, that was after his wife died."

"They all weaken when their wives die."

"Not all; some are not anxious to bridge the gulf," answered Britt, lightly. "I'm told Clarke's communion with his dead wife is now as cool as friendship."

Kate faced him. "It's only fair to say, Dr. Britt, that I, too, am one of the 'bereaved,' and that if I seem more hospitable to these messages than my brother you will understand. My husband died two years ago."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Rice, if I've seemed too harsh in my zeal to explain—"

"Oh, I'm not one to fear the truth," she answered, quickly. "I come of a family of questioners. It's only now and then that I waver—for a moment. My husband said he would come back to me if he could, and I've been half hoping—not really expecting it, you know—"

She did not complete her sentence, and Morton spoke with tender reproach. "I am being profoundly illumined, Kate. Why didn't you tell me that?"

"Because it was only a jocular remark. I didn't intend you should know it. I don't know how I came to let it slip from my mouth. He has never returned, strange to say. I feel mother, but never Hayward."

They had reached a very tender and solemn pause—so self-revealing had been the woman's admission—

and Britt was looking at his plate as his hostess began again with assumed brightness. "Well, now, about this girl. Can you take me to see her? She interests me beyond anything."

"Certainly. I should be delighted. But your brother knows her—she would be pleased to see you both, I've no doubt."

"My brother thinks she is a fraud, and does not wish to see her—"

"I derive my knowledge from you, Dr. Britt."

Britt was undisturbed. "I think she is a fraud, too, but a very charming one."

"That ought to make her all the more convincing," said Kate.

"And all the more dangerous," replied Britt. "She baffles me—when face to face with her."

"What are they going to do with her—exhibit her to the public?"

"Not for the present. Clarke has been making notes industriously all the year and is about ready to publish. He now wants a few of the big fellows, like Uncle Simeon Pratt, to help boom his book. The Lamberts are not in this for money—please give them credit for that—and as for the mother, she is entirely honest—she believes implicitly in her spirits."

"That puts the girl in a horrible position—if she *is* deceiving," Morton interposed. "Imagine her state of mind if she realizes that her own mother has come to rest upon her system of deceit. The thought is horrible."

"It is quite as bad at that," returned Britt. "You see, the mother has been for years in close daily communion—as she supposes—with her husband, her little son, and others of her dead. Half of her daily life is in these joys, the other half in her daughter. There stood the wall that stopped me. I couldn't express my doubt to the mother. I couldn't apply the clamps. I simply withdrew. I do not intend to pursue the matter to a finish so long as the mother is alive."

Morton's face was clouded with pain. "Let us drop the Lamberts as a subject; they are too distressing, especially as I see no way of helping them. When do you return?"

Kate acquiesced in her brother's diversion of the stream of talk, but an hour later, as Britt was about to go, she seized the opportunity to say: "You must not fail to take me to see this girl. I have never been so excited about any one in my life. Can't you take me to-morrow?"

"I am entirely at your service. Suppose I call at four—will that do?"

"Perfectly. I'm very grateful to you."

"I hope you won't come to curse me for it. I warn you, the girl is damnably convincing. She may enamour you."

"No fear of that," she cried, in defiant brightness. "I'm not so easily fooled."

She re-entered the library with the flush of an excited conviction in her face. "Morton, I feel as if I had taken part in the dissection of a human soul."

He threw up his hand with a gesture of pain and despair. "Don't! I can only hope that girl is utterly bad. Otherwise she is the sport of devils. Help me forget the whole uncanny business."

"You're wrong," she said, firmly. "It is just such men as you and Dr. Weissmann who should snatch the pearl of truth from this bucket of mental mire."

"That's a very good phrase, Kate—if only I was sure of the pearl."

There really was no way out for him. His mind utterly discredited the phenomena Viola claimed to produce, and that left but one other interpretation. She was a trickster and auto-hypnotist—uncanny as the fabled women who were fair on one side but utterly foul and corrupt on the other. In his musing her splendid, glowing, physical self drew near, and when he looked into her sweet, clear eyes his brain reeled with doubt of his doubt. If there were any honest eyes in the world, she was innocent, and a tortured victim, as Kate had so quickly decided; and his plain duty was to beat back the forces seeking to devour her.

"The mind is an obscure kingdom subject to inexplicable revolts and sudden confusions," he thought. "Delusions are easy to foment, and at the last are indistinguishable from the fact, so far as the mind which gave them being is concerned. The body of this girl is young, but her brain may be cankered by the sins and lies of a long line of decadent ancestry." The thought was horrible, but it was less revolting than the alternative—in no other way could her life be ex-

plained and excused. In any case it was highly courageous in her to put marriage away as decisively as if it were a crime. And this she must have done, for even Clarke, according to Britt, had thus far sued in vain. There was a heroic strain in the girl somewhere. Was it too late to rescue her from the mental gangrene eating its way to the very centre of her soul? This was the question which only a renewed acquaintance, a careful study could resolve.

IV

THE PATRON OF PSYCHICS

UP to the hour of his wife's death Simeon Pratt had been but the business-man, large of appetite, pitiless, self-sufficient, and self-absorbed—the type of man often described by amiable critics as "a hard citizen, but good to his family, you know," as if the fact of his not beating his wife were adequate excuse for railway wrecking.

He might be seen taking the 7.49 train at Eighty-sixth Street each week-day morning with a bundle of newspapers under his arm, a man of depending jowls and protuberant belly, who never offered any one a seat and did not expect such courtesy from others. He was burly and selfish as a hog, and was often so designated by work-weary women, whom he forced to stand while he read his market reports in callous absorption.

His associates greeted him with a nod, unsmiling and curt, and the elevator-boys at the Pratt building were careful not to elbow him. He had the greed of a wolf and the temper of an aging bear, and yet his business ability admittedly commanded respect. Everything he did had a certain sweep. He was not

penurious or mean in his wars. On the contrary, he despised the small revenges; but in a strife with his equals he was inexorable—he pushed his adversaries to the last ditch, and into it, remorseless as a mountain land-slide.

All the tenderness in his nature, all his faith in goodness and virtue, he reserved for his home. To his wife (a woman of simple tastes and native refinement) and to his children, bright and buxom girls of twenty-odd, he was a fond and gruffly indulgent provider, making little protest over new gowns and parties. He had no sons, and this was a hidden sorrow to him, and had the effect of centring all his paternal pride and care in his daughters. He could deny them nothing when they wheedled him, and they were nearly always humorously and brazenly trying to "work him," as he called it. Only in one particular had he been granite. With means to build on the east side of the Park, he had deliberately chosen the Riverside Drive in order to show his contempt for the social climbers of upper Fifth Avenue, and neither smiles nor tears had availed to change his plan.

His house was a dignified structure exteriorly, but within was dominated by his taste rather than by that of his daughters, who were quite unable to change his habits after they were once set. He refused to consider their suggestions as to furniture. The interior was, as Britt had said, not unlike a very ornately formal French hotel, and this resemblance arose from the fact that he had once enjoyed a pleasant stay in a

house of this sort; and when the decorator submitted a number of "schemes," he chose the one which made the pleasantest impression on his mind.

With three women at the table, he habitually took charge of the dinner, controlling the menu and the decorations as well. It amused outsiders to see him in wordy consultation with the head-waiter and the butler while his guest of honor vainly tried to continue some story he had begun, but his wife suffered in silence. In short, Simeon proceeded precisely as he would have done at a restaurant or at his club, and his family stood clear of his elbow, the girls with sly shrugs of their rounded shoulders, the wife meekly, but ineffectually, protesting against his usurpation of her domain.

He was not politically ambitious, and was in a fair way to grow old as one of the obscure millionaires of New York City when death reached a sable hand and smote him full in the front of his pride and assurance—his wife and daughters were lost in the sinking of a boat off the coast of France.

The news of this disaster came to him as he sat at his desk—the morning papers had given no hint of it. "I don't believe it," he said, quietly, and began pressing the buttons of his desk with the same swift calmness he would have used had the markets been going against him. Messages flew to and fro, the wires pulsed with his imperious anxiety. The manager of the steamboat company answered—denied. The news was confirmed, all to the same end; and when Simeon

Pratt rose from his desk that night his jaw hung lax, his big form stooped and shambled as though twenty additional years had suddenly been heaped upon his shoulders. He went back to his splendid, lonely palace (where the servants huddled and whispered and hastened) with a hard, dry knot in his throat, and with eyes heavy and hot and tearless confronted his ruined altar. From one to be feared he had fallen in a day to the most desolate of beings.

Messengers pursued him. The bodies were recovered. He gave orders for them to be shipped by the first boat. In the blaze of the electric light, with horrid, staring eyes and stiffly moving lips, he cursed himself and God. He cursed himself for letting his treasures go from him, he cursed God for permitting such outrages upon justice. At last he fell silent, but he did not sleep nor eat till the end of the second day. Then he rose, took the 7.49 train as usual, and returned to his desk—unshaved, with creased and crumpled clothing, a gray and battered man, sustained by habit, seeking relief in work.

His associates, with forced cheerfulness, professed pleasure at his return, carefully avoiding mention of his appalling loss. To those who did speak of it he returned no word or glance. With fumbling, thick, and nerveless fingers he took up the purple-lettered ribbon of his trade. He fixed his dim eyes on market reports and dictated notes and orders, but it was a poor show. Even those who hated him as a gross, unlovely character were shocked at his shrunken form,

his grayed and grizzled cheek. When death deals a blow like that the defeated one acquires a certain majesty.

Gradually the old man regained ability to compute and combine, and to converse with his partners concerning the affairs of the house; but his keen interest, his prompt decision of utterance, were all gone. His presence in the office was the result of habit merely. In reality he was waiting the return of the steamer which bore his precious clay.

This boat was delayed by storms, and for three days the broken financier, unable to remain in his office, walked to and fro between Broad Street and Bowling Green, haunting the office of the steamship company until the bloodless manager, nervous and irritated, left his chair to avoid him, unable to endure the sight of his haggard face and piteous eyes.

When the boat arrived, Simeon met it with his own yacht, and, with a return of his iron resolution, stood by to protect the graves of his hopes as they slid across the rail. Then, ordering every soul from the cabin, he sat down beside the caskets. He *knew* that his loved ones were there, and yet he could not realize it. He was filled with a desire to prove it all a mistake, but the fear—the certainty of the disfigured faces—deterred him.

He took them home. Nothing could have been more piercingly pathetic than that flabby, gray old man, sitting alone amid the tawdry splendor of his drawing-room with the remains of all he loved in this

world shut away from him by rosewood and silver. When the last pale and shaking servant had left the room, the father gave one long, hoarse, choking wail, and fell upon his face on the floor, crushed and utterly despairing.

When he rose he was calmer. He began to give orders for a sumptuous funeral, taking charge of every detail in his familiar way. The ceremony was magnificent and profoundly affecting. Every one present in the great church shed tears of heartfelt sorrow, pitying the great banker, quite humanly; but he himself did not weep, he sat limply with eyes on the floor, in a daze of internal emotion; but when the door of the vault closed on his dead a final terrible cry burst from him, the cry of one who realizes to the last and to the full the emptiness, the futility of a life without love, an old age without hope.

His interest in the material world, in the war of trade, was gone. His vast wealth would still bring him dividends, and his clerks and partners would still consult him, still demand his signatures, but the ones who made all these matters worth doing had vanished.

Life seemed utterly useless, a vain effort, but while yet he struggled with the fear of death and a hate of the day, a delegation of those who claim to hold communion with the dead came to him with a greeting from his wife. This message contained words which startled him. He was persuaded to seek confirmation. He was convinced and became the most fervent of

spiritualists. His form lifted, his eyes brightened. A new world opened for him. He announced his intention to use his vast wealth for the faith which had comforted him. He built a magnificent temple to the unseen. He hired speakers and musicians to entertain and instruct those who came to hear. He sought out and entertained scores of mediums, psychics, sensitives, inspiritual speakers, and natural healers—all were welcome at his hearth. He might have been called, and was called, "the prey of harpies," but, as his interests now were in these matters, and as he had the means wherewithal to amuse himself, surely he was not a loser. True, he was many times deceived by false prophets and wronged by fraudulent seers, but still he enjoyed the exquisite solace which the voice of his wife unfailingly brought when the conditions were favorable. He was no longer hopeless; on the contrary, he was reanimated, made over in the faith of the spirit-world. The daughters came less often to speak to him, but when they did come they made his dark, cold heart glow with their gay words. At times it seemed that he could reach out his hands and touch their soft cheeks, so palpable were they, so intimate and familiar were their voices.

Gradually a part of his old-time business shrewdness came to his aid in these intangible matters, and he began to distinguish and to cast out the base and parasitic prestidigitators who infested his house. He grew discerning, and was able to weed the tares from the wheat, and with this discernment came the con-

viction that it was his duty to violently expose those who sought to cheat him. He became a terror to the fraudulent, and by his vigorous denouncement of this and that performer raised storms of opposition; for it seemed that no trickster, no matter how base, was without a following. His purposes clarified. Aided by cunning counsel, he began to conceive of himself as one called to a great mission; and, resigned to his lot, he set himself to the work of furthering in every possible way the reign of the spirit-world.

It was into the hands of this shattered yet still powerful man that Viola Lambert had been persuaded to deliver herself, and Simeon, convinced of her powers by experiment, and charmed by her girlish grace and dignity, had pushed all other keepers of the door of silence from his house, thereby arousing a tempest of denunciation; for these sibyls gave up the luxury of his table, the munificence of his purse, only after persuasion, and in bitterness and wrath.

Viola's meeting with Pratt was brought about by Clarke, who was aware through the special organs of the faith that the great merchant and promoter was not merely insatiable in his thirst for new sources of solace, but exceedingly generous with his comforters. No sooner had he secured the girl's consent to go than he wrote to Pratt asking him to meet them in Boston. Receiving no answer (Pratt was afflicted with such letters), he wrote again, detailing the experiments he had made, laying great stress upon the fact that the psychic was the daughter of a well-to-do Western

mine-owner, that she was a cultured young girl, and that her mother (a distinguished evangel in the cause) was devoted even to the point of submitting her daughter to a series of absolutely convincing tests. He made mention also of his book, which was nearly ready for the press, and which he hoped would create a great stir among scientists.

Simeon did not answer this letter, but sent a representative to Colorow to investigate the writer's claims. The detective returned to say that "the parties" had gone to Boston, but that they had a fine reputation in the region, and that the father was a rich and well-considered citizen. "No one knows anything out o' the way with the girl," the spy added.

Simeon now flamed with eagerness and set out to find Viola and to test her. It was not easy to locate her, for Clarke had proceeded with caution in Boston. After consultation with the editor of *The Spiritist*, and at his suggestion, he had given only a few very private sittings to a few very discreet friends. These evenings, however, had been very successful, and those who had been permitted to attend them had jealously guarded the jewel they had found, selfishly urging continued secrecy. Nevertheless, the circle had spread, and Viola, apparently resigned to her singular function, was patiently sitting night after night in stuffy, darkened rooms, while Clarke, vivid as ever, sonorous as ever, declaimed in passionate rhythms the promise of a new era for spiritism to be inaugurated by the message of "this wonderful organism." He had, indeed, laid out

an elaborate programme for the capture of Boston, but this he instantly dropped when Simeon Pratt sent up his card and asked to see what the girl could do. He demanded a sitting much as a dealer in horses would ask the hostler to drive the proffered animal before him in order that he might judge of her paces. He did not intend to offend; on the contrary, he was instantly consumed with anxiety lest this splendid young creature should refuse to perform.

Viola was deeply offended by his first manner and coldly said: "I am not sitting for money, and I will not be put on exhibition for any one."

Simeon ended by pleading with her for one sitting—one short hour; but she refused, and he went away dejected, flabby with defeat. He returned next day, and still a third time; and at last, to work on her sympathies, he told her how he came to enter the faith, and with broken voice and quivering lips displayed his sorrows.

His weakness availed. The utter tragedy of his life brought the ready tears to Viola's eyes and quite melted her opposition. She saw him in a new light, understood him for what he really was, a lonely, broken old man hastening to the grave, and in her pity consented.

The manifestation which followed he reported as the most marvellous he had ever had. "Jennie, my eldest daughter, spoke from the megaphone for more than an hour, minutely detailing the circumstances of her death, giving orders for the disposition of their

jewels and trinkets, and in other ways most completely satisfied me of her identity."

He rose from this sitting exalted, comforted beyond measure, pathetically happy, quite ready to embrace the blessed girl who had made his hour of sweet communion possible. His home, his private car, his yacht were all at her disposal. No queen, however powerful, could have won such homage from him. "You must come to my home," he said. "I will enlarge your work. I will meet every wish of your 'guides'."

With Clarke and the mother on his side, he prevailed. Viola consented to go to New York as his guest, provided her secret powers were not revealed. "I will not be advertised," she said. "Too many people are coming to see me now. If you publish me I will never sit again."

This threat threw Simeon into a panic. "Of course you will remain private. You will be my guest, the same as your mother. No one but my own family shall know of your wonderful powers. I will see to that."

Perhaps he was honest in this promise, but his habit of entertaining "Arabian Priestesses," "Crystal Gazers," and other women of singular endowments was too well known to permit of the fulfilment of his agreement. No sooner was Viola seen on the drive in his carriage than his friends and hangers-on began to smile and say: "Simeon has a new enchantress. I wonder who she is?" And these remarks aroused the curiosity of the ubiquitous workers for the press. Furthermore,

the directors of the temple, of course, must needs be told, and the other seeresses, neglected by their once-idolized patron, did not need to be told; so that long before Serviss had a hint of her coming the news of Viola's domestication with Simeon was widely disseminated among the faithful, who hurried at once to meet her.

These seekers went with smiling faces and hastening feet, but they came away laggardly, reproaching the master of the temple for a selfish brute. Some few were admitted, stayed, and met the girl and Clarke—for Clarke fairly divided the honors, so vivid, so picturesque was he. He did not hesitate to speak of his great work, a work which would astound the world, and to announce the title of his great oration which Simeon had engaged for the temple. This was the first big gun of his campaign, this compelling oration; but he must have Viola's consent to the use of her name—her consent also to sit with a group of chosen great men of the city in order to issue a defiant challenge to science. From these special sittings he expected to deduce the final and greatest chapter of his book.

From this public test of her power Viola still shrank, but Pratt's wealth and power, which Clarke continually emphasized, fairly stunned her into acquiescence. So far from being a faith of the poor, the obscure, a faith that lurked in dark corners, avoiding the direct gaze of men, spiritualism from the portals of a resplendent temple appeared to be not merely respectable but triumphant. From this sacred meeting-place of the

angelic forces, from the windows of Pratt's palatial home, she looked out upon the city with more of content with her mission than she had ever known before—troubled only by a deeply hidden wish to see again the man whose buoyant health and smiling eyes had so strongly impressed her on their ride into the Marshal Basin.

But this sense of security of power did not last. As the novelty of her position in Pratt's household wore away she found her duties irksome. She resented the flocks of curious or melancholy visitors and began to perceive the bitter truth—that she was only a servant, after all, ministering to the pleasures of Pratt and his friends. She had very little time to herself, and could not escape her masters even for a drive in the Park—one or the other of them was always at her side.

She attempted to withdraw her consent to the use of her name, but Clarke, the guides, even her mother, insisted on the test. Britt alone of all her friends took the side of her fears. They were in correspondence of a formal sort, and when he reached the city he went straight to her, anxious to know what Clarke's plans actually were. To him she spoke more freely than ever before, expressing her dread of the flaring light which Clarke was about to turn upon her.

Britt listened gravely. "There is one way of escape," he said at last, with a smile, both mocking and tender. "I don't pretend to say it's to your mind, but want to remind you that my offer is still open.

If you give me the necessary authority I will stop this crusade with a jolt."

"I'm grateful to you, Dr. Britt, truly I am, but I can't do what you ask—not even—" She hesitated and fell silent.

"Not even to save your life or mine. I don't blame you—I am but a poor thing."

"I didn't mean it that way. I respect you very, very much; but you must know Anthony depends on me, and, besides, maybe it *is* my duty to go on the platform. Father and grandfather both say it is. To them it seems small and selfish of me to want to be happy in my own home while the millions weep uncomforted; but oh, if I could only live my own life *part* of the time! If I could feel free of this terrible weight one day in seven."

Britt, looking into her clear eyes, acquired a new confidence in her. "Tell me, Miss Lambert, do you really believe that your father comes to you in this way?"

"I dare not doubt it," she answered, with evasive eyes.

"Some of the messages are not specially—"

"I know," she acquiesced, with a shudder. "There are evil spirits as well as good, and sometimes the bad ones come. I don't see why grandfather permits them to use me. He says he can't always help it if there are bad people in the circle. That is another reason why I dread this public test—there is no knowing what the evil spirits might make me say or do.

If it did not mean so much to Anthony I would refuse—even if grandfather asked it."

"I saw Professor Serviss to-day."

"Did you?" Her eyes were instantly alight. "Where did you see him? Does he know we are here?"

"He didn't know till I told him. I called at his laboratory."

"Did you tell him where we are?"

"Yes; and he felt as I do, that this is not a good place for you. Pratt has the reputation of entertaining sensational characters, and it will be a miracle if you are not exploited to the press."

Her face clouded again. "Oh, I am so tired of having people look at me and shrug and whisper. I am so tired of having this abnormal thing reflected in the eyes of all my visitors. I wish I could become commonplace—without the slightest thing queer about me. Sometimes I feel like taking a dose of poison and ending it all."

"Don't do that," Britt replied, soberly. "You mustn't even say such a thing. I wish I could help you, but I see no way so long as your own parents and Clarke himself are your guides; but if at any time you will give me the authority"—here his voice became stern—"I will see that you are not troubled by any outside influence."

"You are very kind," she said, but her face expressed only a troubled liking, and he pressed her hand in both of his and silently went away.

Young Clinton Ward also came seeking, boyish,

eager, contemptuous of any barrier so illusory as the fact of her trances, which she confessed to him. Her words hardly impressed themselves on his mind, and he replied, flippantly: "That cuts no ice with me. You couldn't be anything I wouldn't like. You're living too close and your nerves are sort of frazzled. What you need is a jolly good time. Come back to Boston and forget all about this business. Come, I want folks to meet you. My mother knows how I feel about you, and is crazy to see you."

"What would she say if she knew what I have told you?" she asked, bitterly.

"She won't mind—after she sees you," he answered, loyally. "No one can know you without—without—Oh, hang it, Viola, you know what I mean. Nothing matters when you love a person. I want you, no matter what any one says. And, besides, I don't see why you can't just chuck the whole blooming business. I'll chuck Clarke out o' the window, if you say the word. He's just trying to work you, and—"

"You mustn't talk that way, Clinton."

"Why not? It's true."

"Well, because—" She hesitated, then said, as if to end her own uncertainty: "I am committed to this life—and to him. My way is marked out, and I must walk in it."

The young fellow was hard hit. He sat looking at her with eyes of consternation and awe. He tried to speak, but could not for a little while; at last he made a second trial. "Do you mean—you *don't* mean—"

"Yes, I mean—all you think I mean," she answered, and then her fortitude failed her, and she turned away, her eyes filled with hot tears.

He rose awkwardly, all his jaunty self-confidence gone. "I take my medicine. It's all right. I hope you'll be happy—" He broke off with quivering lips.

"I shall never be happy," she said, and the very calmness of her voice went to the boy's heart. "I've given up all hope of being anything but an instrument—a thing whose wishes do not count. Good-bye, Clint," and she gave her hand.

He took it and pressed it hard and went out into the street, staggering under the weight of the revelation he had received.

Viola was fond of Clinton—his simple, wholesome, untroubled nature appealed to her—and yet this very ingenuousness, this ready confidence, made her own life and daily habit seem the more forbidding. She understood now the insuperable barrier which had been raised between herself and the careless youth of the normal world.

In this hour of depression, as in many others, her mind went out towards Morton Serviss. Britt's mention of the young scientist's name seemed to bring him very near, and she wondered again for the hundredth time whether he had entirely forgotten her or not. Would he call, now that he was informed of her presence in the city? She knew (almost as well as if he had written it) the reason for his hasty flight from Colorow, and with a knowledge that he considered her

a freak if not something worse she could not write to him, although she still had his card and address.

He was a greater man in the world than when he visited their mountain home, for he had written a book which the critics called "a great and implacable study of diseases and their uses." She had not been able to read it, but she treasured it, nevertheless, and longed to meet him again, to lay her case before him, to ask his advice, not with regard to whether she should go on with her music, but whether her life was worth continuing—for there were times when she secretly considered the morality of making an end of it. It was in the hope of drawing him again to her side that she asked Clarke to include him in the list of scientific men to whom he was planning to send a printed copy of his oration and challenge—after their delivery—and to her mother she said: "I would not be so nervous if I knew that Dr. Serviss were on the committee; I know he would be just and considerate, even if he does despise mediums."

"He's exactly the one," responded Mrs. Lambert, with enthusiasm. "I wonder Tony hasn't spoken of him. Grandfather will be delighted, I'm sure."

V

KATE VISITS VIOLA

TOWARDS Simeon's portal, held sacred to "The Keepers of the Keys of the Silent House," Kate Rice and Dr. Britt set their faces at the appointed hour.

"The plot thickens round the girl," began Britt, with a kind of mocking levity. "Mrs. Lambert has done it now!"

They had reached the comparative quiet of the cross-street. "What has she done?"

"She has delivered her ewe-lamb over to this ancient wolf of Wall Street, who will eat her up for a Little Red Riding-hood. I've been looking into Pratt's record. He has a cheerful way, I'm told, of treating his 'psychics' like oranges—squeezing them and throwing them into the street. He has become so sensitive to the sneers of the outsiders that he fears to be 'done.' After getting all that a medium can give him, he 'exposes' her elaborately, and sets her adrift, and so guards himself from the possible accusation of having been deceived. If there is any question of the medium's powers, he can then come out with a card saying: 'I knew So-and-so was a fraud. I exposed her

two years—or two months—ago.' I see the girl's finish right here."

"The dreadful old man! Does the girl know this?"

"I don't think she does, but she ought to. I hate to see a nice girl, who would make some one a charming wife, perverted to these unholy uses. The crowning infamy heaped upon her head will be a full page in the *Sunday Blast*—'Another Harpie Exposed'—and it will come, Mrs. Rice, I am sure of it. Pratt fairly fawns before her now. She is his princess, his seeress, his chief jewel; but woe to her if she displeases him or fails to meet his requirements."

"You appall me, Dr. Britt. Some one should at least warn her."

"I've already done so; but with the mother, Clarke, and Pratt to war against, the case seems hopeless. Besides, she believes in herself—up to a certain point. She'll never degenerate into one of those frumps who go from city to city playing to the foolish women and tack-headed men, but she will certainly be corrupted. If she marries Clarke her future will be woful. She has entered in so far I don't see how she can retreat. She is bound to keep on for his sake and her mother's sake.

"Is she in love with Clarke?"

"That I haven't been able to determine, but she is under his control, or she wouldn't be here."

With these gloomy words in her ears Kate entered the big, cold drawing-room to wait for the coming of the master of the house.

"Pratt is the one to whom you are to pay your first respects—he is master," warned Britt. "Ask to see his collections—that always pleases him. If you will permit, I will lead the way."

"I am trusting you."

"You may do so."

Pratt came in quite briskly, a heavy-faced, white-bearded man, wearing a sack-suit and an old-fashioned turn-down collar. He greeted Britt with a casual hand-shake, looking at Kate suspiciously. "And who is this?" he asked, bluffly.

"A friend of mine, a Mrs. Rice, who desires to see your wonderful collection of slates and paintings."

Pratt softened a little. "I'll be very glad to show them," he said, "but not now. I'll have to ask you to excuse me just now. I am in consultation with my directors."

"Certainly," said Britt, and, after Pratt went out, he added: "That means that Clarke is going to launch his thunderbolt. He's going to defy the scientific world in the most burning oration since Cicero.

At this moment two ladies, in superb wraps, descended the stairway on their way to their carriages, and one of them said, "I think it's a shame—as long as we've known Simeon Pratt—to be turned away like a tramp!"

"Oh, I don't blame her," said the other.

"Some disappointed callers," said Britt.

A moment later several other curious ones were ushered into the drawing-room. Britt kept up a low-

toned comment. "All these rubber-necks are here to see the girl. You will be surprised to know how many there are with a sneaking belief in these revelations."

It was a singular situation in which to find Simeon Pratt—major-domo to a crowd of idle curiosity-seekers—and when he returned, with an assumption of haste and bustle, Britt saw him in a new light—that of a poor, lonely, broken old man, weary of life, yet living on in daily hope of communion with the dead, stuffing his heart with dreams and delusions, walking mechanically round, interested only in death.

He had forgotten Kate's name, but he remembered her wish to see his treasures.

"Come to my library," he said; "but first let me call your attention to this remarkable painting."

The painting—or rather wash-drawing in black-and-white—hung over the grand-piano in the light of the west windows. It was globular in form, and represented, Simeon explained, the "War of Light and Darkness." One-half of the globe was darkly shaded, curiously fretted by the lighter half. Above sat a snow-white eagle. Beneath, with prodigious wings outspread, and eyes gleaming like points of fire, hovered a mysterious bat.

"Look closer," commanded Simeon.

Narrower scrutiny brought out, even in the darker half of the globe, a multitude of intertwined forms. outlined with pen and ink. Those of the lighter hemisphere were beautiful as angels, with faint stars in their hair. All were singing. The others, the deni-

zens of the dark, were twisted and contorted in agony, and each was drawn with such certainty of prearrangement that the line which formed the arm of one outlined the head of another. There were hundreds of them, and the whole work was as intricate in design as the engraving on a bank-note, and so packed with symbolism—according to Simeon's exegesis—that one might study it for days. "Observe," said he, "the innumerable faces formed by the line which divides the two worlds. Take these glasses."

Kate, by means of the powerful instrument which he thrust upon her, was able to detect hundreds of other faces invisible to the unaided eye. "It is wonderful. Who did it?"

"A Swedish servant-girl," answered Simeon, loudly, addressing every one in the room. "She couldn't write her name; but when the spirit of Raphael controlled her she could do this with her eyes shut. There's nothing like that picture in the world. It cannot be duplicated by any artist in the flesh."

"That's no dream," murmured Britt.

Pratt hurried them on, past many other equally wonderful paintings, to his library, and as his guests filed in he faced them. "The things I am about to show you have no equal anywhere. They have taken years to collect, and have cost me more than a hundred thousand dollars. I can show you but a few."

The library was a splendid room, rich with the light of the western sun, whose arrangement instantly struck Kate Rice as unusual, for the book-shelves were

precisely like those of a butler's pantry. They began at about four feet from the floor and reached entirely to the ceiling, and were filled with splendid, neglected books, while beneath a broad shelf, at their base, were rows of little brass knobs, each of which indicated a shallow drawer. Each drawer had a lock and a small plate which bore a letter and a number, not unlike the cabinet of a numismatist.

"There are but two keys in existence," explained Simeon, with shining face. "The one I now hold and the one in my safety vaults. No one is permitted in this room without my secretary or myself." He moved down the room between the cabinet and the big table. "Here is a message from Columbus." He unlocked and drew out one of the drawers and laid it upon the table. It was exquisitely made, and contained two ordinary hinged school-slates, with the inner sides visible, but protected by a heavy plate of glass. "This message came to me through Angelica Cox—under test conditions," Pratt further explained, as Kate bent above it.

"What do you mean by test conditions?" asked Britt.

"I mean, sir, that I bought and took these slates to the medium, and held them in my hands while that message was written." There was irritation in his voice. He replaced the drawer. "But here is a painting from Murillo, the great artist. He painted the face of one of the ancients." He laid before his silent auditors another drawer which contained a sheet of

card-board on which was a fairly good pastel of an Arab in a burnouse. It had the weak and false drawing which would result in the attempt of an amateur to copy an engraving in color. "This came in broad daylight while I held the clean card-board on my head," explained Simeon.

Britt looked at Kate. "The painter might have stood on his head," he blasphemously whispered.

And so down through that splendid room the host moved, exhibiting letters from Napoleon, flowers from Marie Antoinette, verses from Mary Queen of Scots, together with paternal advice from many others equally eminent in history.

"You keep good company," ventured Kate. "Have you anything from Shakespeare?"

"Certainly; and from Edwin Forrest and Lincoln and Grant."

"Anything from Admiral Kidd?" asked Britt.

"Or from Mary Jane Holmes?" added Kate.

Simeon looked at the jokers in silence, not quite sure whether they intended to trap him or not. "No, I save only the words of the most eminent persons in history, outside my own family—I have wonderful testimony from them."

"Ah, show us those, please," cried Kate.

He hesitated, pondering Britt's face, and at last said, "I will show you some materializations," and led the way to some cases filled with pressed flowers. "These are from India and Tibet," he explained.

Kate was getting bored, but Britt seemed fascinated

by both Pratt and the exhibit. "To think of one human being possessing a collection like that—painfully amassing it. It's too beautiful!"

"But the girl—ask him to let us see the girl," she urged.

"Don't hurry; he can't be turned aside from his groove."

The treasures of the drawers hinted at, Simeon proceeded to exhibit other wonders. He possessed a coin brought from the sacred city of Lhasa and dropped through the ceiling into a closed and sealed box. "There is no other known to the Western Hemisphere," he said. "The British Museum offered me a thousand pounds for it."

To his mind all these slates, pictures, and flowers were evidences of the interest the great shades had taken in the work of converting Simeon Pratt to the faith, and the messages were intended to steady him in his convictions and to furnish him material with which to bring the world to his view. The man's faith was like to madness—without one ray of humor.

At any other time this astounding museum would have been a most absorbing study to Kate, but she was tingling with desire to get at the young seeress and her mother. "What must they be," she asked herself, "to mix with this kind of idiocy?"

At last, when the favoring pause came, Britt explained to Pratt that Mrs. Rice was the sister of one who had known Viola in the West, and that she very much wished to see the psychic for a moment.

"I think Miss Lambert is engaged," replied Simeon, sulkily; "but I'll see," and he led the way to a small sitting-room on the same floor. "Stay here and I'll send your card up."

"Tell her a sister of Professor Serviss."

Simeon turned quickly. "Serviss—ain't he one of the men that Clarke talks of having on the committee? Are you his sister?"

Kate bowed. "Yes; my brother met Miss Lambert in the West."

Pratt's face cleared. "Well, well! I will send her right down. Your brother is the kind of man we want to reach," he added, as he went out.

"Now, Dr. Britt," began Kate, firmly, "I want you to keep that boresome old man occupied while I talk with these women. I don't want him putting in his oar."

"I'll do my best," he answered, manfully, "up to the measure of gagging him. I can't agree to order him out of the house."

Kate was on her chair's edge with interest as she heard the rustle of skirts and the murmur of a pleasant voice, and when Viola, flushed, smiling, beautifully gowned, entered the room with outstretched hand, she rose with a spring, carried out of her well-planned reserve by the warmth and charm of the girl's greeting. She closed her gloved palm cordially on the fine hand so confidingly given. "I am glad to know you. My brother has spoken so enthusiastically of you."

Viola's flush deepened. "Has he? I assure you we

speak often of him. I suppose he is too busy with his wonderful microbes to come and see poor, commonplace creatures like us."

"He *is* busy, but he only learned of your presence a few days ago."

Viola turned. "Mother, this is Mrs. Rice, Professor Serviss's sister."

Kate liked Mrs. Lambert also, for she was looking remarkably handsome in a black gown of simple pattern. "If these are adventuresses they are very clever in dress," was her inward comment. "I don't wonder Morton was captivated." And she presently said: "Can't you take me to your own room? I want to talk secrets with you."

"Yes, let us do that." Viola turned to her mother. "Let's take Mrs. Rice to our sitting-room."

Mrs. Lambert assented timidly, with a quick glance towards Simeon, who was garrulously declaiming to Britt concerning the wonders of another painting by the Swedish cook.

Pratt, seeing the women rise, approached. "Where are you going?" he asked, with a note of impatience in his voice.

"To my room," answered Viola, firmly, and led the way up-stairs in silence; but when they were beyond earshot in the hall above she bitterly exclaimed: "He spies on everything I do. He will hardly let me out of his sight. I am beginning to hate him, he has so little sense of decency."

"Viola!" warned the mother.

"I don't care," retorted the girl, defiantly. "Why do we endure him—we are not dependent on him. He treats us precisely as if he owned us, and I'm tired of it. I wish papa would come on and take us home."

"He may be a bore, but he houses you like royalty," Kate remarked, as she glanced about the suite which Viola and her mother occupied. It formed the entire eastern end of the third floor of the house, and the decorations were Empire throughout, with stately canopied beds and a most luxurious bath-room.

"Oh yes, it's beautiful; but I would rather be this minute in our little log-cabin in the West," answered the girl, with wistful sadness. "Oh, these warm days make me homesick. When I was there I hated it, now I long to get back. I seem five years older—this winter has been terribly long to me."

"Well, now, lock the door," exclaimed Kate, excitedly, "and tell me all about yourself. Start at the very beginning. Dr. Britt has told me something, but I want to know everything. When did you first know you had this power? That's the first question."

Mrs. Lambert began in the tone of one retelling an old story. "Up till the day my little son Walter died, Viola was just like any other girl of her age—healthy and pretty—a very pretty child."

"I can believe it." Kate's eyes dwelt admiringly on the girl.

"My husband and I were good Presbyterians, and I had never given much thought to spirits or spiritualism, but after our little boy died Robert began to

study up, and every time we went to the city he'd go to see a psychic, and that troubled me. As a good church-member I thought he ought not to do it, and so one day I said, 'Robert, I think you ought to tell Mr. McLane'—that was our minister—'what you are doing. It isn't right to visit mediums and go to church, too—one or the other ought to be given up.' He said—I remember his exact words: 'I can't live without these messages of comfort from my boy. They say he is going to manifest himself soon—here in our own home.' I remember that was his exact expression, for I wondered what it was to manifest. That very night things began."

Kate's eyes snapped. "What things?"

"Well, Waltie had a little chair that he liked—a little reed rocking-chair—and my husband always kept this chair close by where he sat reading. That night I saw the chair begin to rock all by itself—and yet, some way, it didn't scare me. 'Robert, did you move Waltie's chair?' I asked. 'No,' he said. 'Why?' 'Because it rocked.' Robert threw down his book and looked at the chair. 'Viola must have moved it,' he said. 'Viola was in her own little chair on the other side of the table,' I said. 'It must have been the cat, then.'

"And then, just while we both looked at it, it began to move again exactly as if Waltie were in it. It creaked, too, as it used to when he rocked."

"I should have been frightened stiff," exclaimed Kate, whose eyes were beginning to widen.

"Nothing that has happened since has given me such a turn. Robert jumped up and felt all about the chair, sure that Viola had tied a string to it—and still she was no child for tricks. Then Robert bent right down over the chair, and it stopped for a moment, and then slid backward under the table, just as our own boy used to do. He loved to play tent. Robert looked up at me as white as the dead. 'It is Waltie, mother; he has come back to us,' he said, and I believed it, too."

In spite of herself, Kate shivered with a keen, complete comprehension of the thrilling joy and terror of that moment, but Viola sat listlessly waiting the end of her mother's explanation. Plainly, it was all a wearisome story to her.

Mrs. Lambert went on: "After that he came every night, and soon the tappings began, and finally we got into communication with my father, who told us to be patient and wait and Waltie would speak to us. Then the power took hold of Viola and frightened her almost into fits."

The girl visibly shuddered and her eyes fell.

"How did it begin?" asked Kate, breathless with interest.

"The first we noticed was that her left arm began to twitch so that she couldn't control it. Then she took to writing with her left hand, exactly like my father's hand-writing. She could write twenty different kinds of writing before she was twelve. These messages were all signed, and all said that she was to be a great

medium. Then began the strangest doings. My thimbles would be stolen and hidden, vases would tumble off the mantels, chairs would rock. It was just pandemonium there some nights. They used to break things and pound on the doors; then all of a sudden these doings stopped and Viola went into deathly trances. I shall never forget that first night. We thought she was dead. We couldn't see her breathe, and her hands and feet were like ice."

The girl rose, her face gray and rigid. "Don't mother, don't!" she whispered. "*They are here!*" She shook her head and cried out as if to the air: "No, no, not now! No, no!"

The mother spoke. "She is being entranced. Some one has a message for you, Mrs. Rice?"

For the first time, Kate had a suspicion of both mother and daughter. This action of the girl seemed a thought too opportune and much too theatric. Now that her splendid eyes were clouded she lost confidence in her, and as she waited she grew cold with a kind of disgust and fear of what was to follow.

The mother gently sided with her daughter against the control, and, taking both her hands, said, quietly: "Not now, father, not now." But in vain. The girl sank back into her chair rigid. "They have something they insist on saying, Mrs. Rice," said Mrs. Lambert, after a silence. "Is it some one for Mrs. Rice?" Three loud snapping sounds came from the carpet under Viola's feet.

"Good gracious! What is that?" exclaimed Kate, a cold tremor passing up her spine.

"It is my father," answered Mrs. Lambert, quite placidly. "Can't you write, father? Be easy on Viola to-day.—He is very anxious to converse with you for some reason, Mrs. Rice."

Again a creeping thrill made Kate's hair rise, and she bit her finger-tip. "Am I dreaming?" she asked herself, as she listened to the mother talking to the air, only to be answered by rappings from the table and thumpings from the chairs. "How absurd, how childish it all is!" she thought.

Even as this thought passed through her mind, the room seemed to darken, the air to thicken. The girl's proud young body sank, doubled till she seemed a crone, old and withered and jocose; a sneering laugh came from her drawn lips; her hands, trembling together, hookedly reached towards Kate; the eyes were sunk lidless and gleaming with malice; a voice that was like the croak of a raven sounded forth: "You got my money, Kit—but you didn't get it all." And from the young, distorted lips a disgusting laugh issued, a laugh that froze Kate's blood and stiffened her tongue so that she could not cry out. She gasped and sank back into her chair, while the voice went on: "You know me. I always hated you—you wasted my money—you poisoned my pets—I hated your husband—he cheated me once—you'll get no joy of my money till you pay that debt."

Kate, inert, aghast, sat blindly staring while this

vindictive, remorseless voice went on; only when it stopped was she aware of the mother's serene attitude of waiting, of polite regret at being present at a disagreeable scene; then the girl's lips resumed their sweetness, the beautiful hands fell slack upon her knees, the head lifted and, turning, rested peacefully against the cushion of her chair. The table was violently shaken. A small ornament upon it leaped into the air and fell in Kate's lap. She sprang to her feet with a cry of alarm, shaking the thing away as if it were a toad, and was about to flee when Mrs. Lambert's voice struck her into immobility, so unconcerned was it, so utterly matter of fact.

"Did you know the spirit visitor?" she asked.

With the question Kate's panic ceased. Her awe, her fright, passed into wonder and amazement.

"It was exactly like my great-aunt," she gaspingly admitted. "But, oh, it was terrible! Why *do* you let her go into such states?"

"We cannot control these manifestations. Hush! They are not yet finished. They are about to write for you."

Still lying in languid ease, the girl lifted one hand to the table—to Kate it seemed that the hand was raised by some outside invisible power—and there it rested, as though weary and meditating. As it paused thus the girl's eyes opened, and she sat regarding it as though it belonged to some other intruding self. Mrs. Lambert brought a pencil and a pad of paper, and laid them upon the stand.

Suddenly the hand woke to vigorous action. Seizing the pencil as a dog might lay hold upon a bone, it began to write slowly, firmly, while Viola watched it, quietly, detachedly, as if it were something entirely separate from her brain. At the end it tore the leaf from the pad and flung it to the floor.

Mrs. Lambert picked it up. "It is from father," she said; "but it is for you."

Kate took the leaf, on which was written, in a firm, round, old-fashioned hand, these words: "Your aunt is here, and asks that you and your brother pay her debt. She is angry because it has not been done."

"I have no knowledge of any such debt," said Kate. "I don't understand this."

The hand was writing again, busily, imperturbably, and the color was coming back into Viola's face. As Kate waited, her awe began to pass, and doubts came thronging back upon her. There was something farcical in all this.

Again the hand flung its message, and again the mother picked it from the floor.

"This also is from father," she announced, with more of excitement than she had hitherto betrayed.

The message began abruptly: "The doubter may be convinced if he will but put himself in the way of it. The life of my granddaughter is more valuable today than that of any king or queen. Her mission is to open the door between the two worlds. She is here ready for the test. Let the men of science come to

her and be convinced of the life beyond the grave." It was signed with an elaborate rubric "McLeod."

"Who is this message for, father?" asked Mrs. Lambert. "Mrs. Rice?"

A violent thump answered "No."

"Maybe it's for my brother," suggested Kate.

Three tremendous thumps upon the underside of the table gave affirmative answer.

Kate was quite restored to her ruddy self. "Very well, I will see that he gets it."

Viola now spoke wearily, but quite in her natural voice again. "There is no test in that kind of a message. I didn't write it—I had nothing to do with it; but you or Professor Serviss would be justified in thinking I did. Grandpa wanted me to go into a trance. This kind of writing is a compromise."

"But what of my aunt who spoke through you?" asked Kate.

Viola stared at her blankly, and her mother laid a warning hand on Kate's arm. "She knows nothing of these impersonations," she said.

"What did I do?" asked Viola. "I hope nothing ridiculous."

"Mrs. Rice's aunt spoke through you, that's all," answered Mrs. Lambert, reassuringly.

"Tell me more," said Kate, eagerly. "It is all so unreal to me—I want to see more. Dr. Britt has told us wonderful things of you. Do you really believe the dead speak to you?"

"They are with us all the time," placidly, yet de-

cisively, answered Mrs. Lambert. "We are never alone. I can feel them always near."

Kate shrank. "I don't believe I like that—altogether. Don't you feel oppressed by the thought?"

"Yes, I do," answered Viola; "they take all the joy out of my life."

"Dearest!" warned the mother.

"It is true, and I want Mrs. Rice to know it. Since I was ten years old I have not been free of the thing for a day—only in the high mountains. There I could always draw a long breath. I am glad you've come, Mrs. Rice. I want you to ask Professor Serviss to come and investigate me. My only hope is in the men of science. Tell him I want him to help me understand myself." She was speaking now with force and heat. "I want him to padlock me and nail me down. I want to know whether I am in the hands of friends or enemies. Sometimes I think devils are playing with me. All my life I've been tortured by these powers; even at school they came banging about my bed, scaring my room-mates. They disgraced me before my teacher, the one I loved best. They interfered with my music, they cut me off from my friends, and now they've landed me here in this strange house with this dreadful old man, and I want some one, some good man who knows, some one who is not afraid, to come and test me. Mamma never doubts, Mr. Clarke is entirely satisfied, and this Mr. Pratt is worse than all. I don't believe in his pictures, I don't believe in what I do—I don't know what I believe," she ended,

despairingly; then added, fiercely: "This I *do* know, I want to be free from it—free, free—absolutely free. I pray to God to release me, but He does not, and my slavery grows worse every day."

The girl's intensity of utterance thrilled Kate to the heart. Here was the cry of a tortured soul, the appeal of one in bondage. Dr. Britt was right, she was a victim.

"You poor thing. I begin to understand. *I* will help you, and so will my brother. He is already interested in you. He is just the one to advise with you. If any one can help you he can. He is so keen-eyed, so strong."

"I know he is. Have him come soon, won't you?"

The mother interposed. "But, dearie, you know Mr. Clarke says—"

"I know what he says," the girl answered, her face sullen and weary again. "He and all of you have no regard for me. You pretend to have, but you are all willing to sacrifice me to prove a theory. I don't care whether spiritualism is true or not, I want to have one single day when I can be sure of being myself, free to come and go like other girls. I feel as if I had a band of iron around my neck. I shall go mad with it some day."

Kate, usually ready, blunt, and fearless, sat in silence, perfectly convinced by the fury of the girl's protest, stunned by a belief in the complete truth of her indignant accusations. These devotees, these fanatics, were immolating a beautiful young life on the

altar of their own selfish faith. The virgin was already bound to the rock, and the priest, torch in hand, was about to apply the flame.

"What can *I* do? I want to help you—"

An imperious knock at the door interrupted her, and for an instant Kate thought this another spirit message, but Mrs. Lambert called out, "Is that you, Anthony?"

A deep voice answered, "Yes, it is I. I have something to tell you." Clarke opened the door and stepped within, a handsome, dark, theatrical figure.

Mrs. Lambert rose to meet him. "What is it, Anthony?"

"We've decided on the date. I am to speak on the second," he answered exultantly.

Viola started up. "You shall not use my name. I forbid it!" Her hands were clinched, her eyes blazed with the fury of her determination, and she struck her heel upon the floor. "I tell you I forbid it!"

Clarke pushed Mrs. Lambert aside and strode to the centre of the room; his face was hard, his tone contemptuous. "You forbid it! What is your puny will against the invisible ones? You forbid it?" His voice changed as he asked, "Who has influenced you to *this* childish revolt?" He turned to Kate. "Have you, madam?"

Kate Rice was not one to be outfaced. "If I have, I shall be most happy," she answered. "Who are you that demand so much of this poor girl?"

"I am the one chosen by her 'control' to convey their message to the world."

Kate recoiled a little. "Oh, you are? Well, I don't care if you are. You have no right to use her name in this way without her consent."

"Her consent! What she desires or what I desire is of small account. We are both in the grasp of the invisible forces, making for the happiness of the race. She can't refuse to go on. It is her duty. There are millions of other women to sing, to dance, to amuse men—there is only one Viola Lambert in the world. Nothing in the annals of the occult exceeds her wonderful mediumship. She *must* give herself to the world of science. She *must* help us to prevail over the terrors of the grave. Her mission is magnificent. Her fame will fill the earth."

Kate stoutly confronted him. "Perhaps the fame you give her will destroy her. It sounds to me like notoriety rather than fame. This poor child has a right to herself, and I will help her assert it."

Clarke's eloquent hand fell to his side. Something in Kate's calm, matter-of-fact speech reached his shrewder self. He perceived here no mean antagonist. "You need not take the trouble, madam. I am guarding her. *They* are guarding her."

It was plain that both Mrs. Lambert and her daughter were profoundly in obedience if not in terror of this wild young evangel, and Kate, to test her divination, said, "Suppose she refuses?"

"She dare not refuse. Her 'control' would cut her

down where she stands. She has no choice where they are concerned. The hands are upon her this moment," he ended, triumphantly.

A shudder of despair went over the girl. "It's true; I feel them here." She touched her throat. "They are all against me—the living and the dead," and she fell into her chair with a moan of despair, her beauty, her shining garments adding to the pity of her fate. Kate's heart went out to her without reservation as she knelt beside her.

"I am for you, my dear, and so is my brother; we will help you, I give you my word. Be brave. You must see Morton and Dr. Weissmann. They will know what to do."

Viola turned upon her mother with a wail of supplication. "Take me home, mother, take me home!"

Mrs. Lambert herself was weeping now. "I dare not, dearie, not till *they* consent. Be patient—they have promised to release you after this test."

Over the girl's face a stony rigidity spread, her eyelids drooped, her head rolled from side to side, a pitiful, moaning cry came from her pinched lips, and then, at last, drawing a long, peaceful sigh, she slept.

Kate, in terror, stood watching, waiting till the lines of struggle, of pain, smoothed out, and the girl, doubly beautiful in her resignation, lay like one adorned for the angel of death. Then Clarke said, solemnly: "She has ceased to struggle. She is in good hands, in the care of those who love her and understand her; when

she wakes she will be newly consecrated to her great work. Come."

Kate, awed and helpless, permitted him to lead her from the room, but when fairly outside she turned upon him fiercely: "Don't touch me. I despise you. You are all crazy, a set of fanatics, and you'd sacrifice that poor girl without a pang. But you sha'n't do it, I tell you—you sha'n't do it!"

And with that defiant phrase she swept past him down to the street, forgetting Dr. Britt in her frenzy of indignation and defeat.

VI

SERVISS LISTENS SHREWDLY

MEANWHILE Morton, with an armful of the publications of "The Society for Psychical Research" before him, was busied with the arguments of the spiritists and their bearings on Viola Lambert's case.

The thing claimed—that the dead spoke through her—he could not for a moment entertain. Such a claim was opposed to all sound thinking, to every law known to science—was, in short, preposterous.

He had acquired all the prejudices against such a faith from Emerson's famous phrase, "rat-hole philosophy," down to the latest sneer in the editorial columns of *The Pillar*, to the latest "exposé" in *The Blast.* Upon the most charitable construction, those who believed in rappings, planchettes, materialized forms, ghosts, messages on slates, and all the rest of the amazing catalogue, were either half-baked thinkers, intellectual perverts, or soft-pated sentimentalists, whose judgment was momentarily clouded by the passing of a grief.

"And yet," said one author, "go a little deeper and you will find in the very absurdities of these phenomena a possible argument for their truth. A manu-

factured system would be careful to avoid putting forward as evidence a thing so childish and so ludicrous as a spirit tipping a table, writing in a bottle, or speaking through a tin horn. Who but a childlike and trusting soul would expect to convince a man of science of the immortality of the soul by causing a message from his grandfather to appear in red letters on his arm? The hit-or-miss character of all these phenomena, the very silliness and stupidity which you find in the appeal, may be taken as evidence of the sincerity of the psychic."

To this Morton took exception. "I don't see that. There has never been a religion too gross, too fallacious, to fail of followers. Remember the sacred bull of Egypt and the snake-dance of the Hopi. The whole theory, as Spencer says, is a survival of a more primitive life and religion."

Finding himself alone with Weissmann during the afternoon, he said, carelessly:

"If you were called upon to prove the falsity or demonstrate the truth of the spiritualistic faith—how would you set to work?"

Weissmann was a delicious picture as he stood facing his young colleague. He was dressed to go home, and was topped by a low-crowned, broad-brimmed, black hat, set rather far back on his head, and floating like a shallop on the curling wave of his grizzled hair. His eyebrows, gray, with two black tufts near the nose, resembled the antennæ of a moth. His loose coat, his baggy trousers, and a huge umbrella finished the

picture. He was a veritable German professor—a figure worthy of *Die Fliegende Blätter*.

"I can't say exactly," he replied, thoughtfully. "In general I would bring to bear as many senses as possible. I would see, I would hear, I would touch. I would make electricity my watch-dog. I would make matter my trap."

"But how?"

"That, circumstances would determine. My plan would develop to fit the cases. I would begin with the simplest of the phenomena."

"Do you know Myers's book?"

"Bah! No."

"And yet they say it is a careful and scientific study."

"They say! Who say?"

Serviss smiled. "The spiritualists." Then lightly added: "What would you and the rest of the scientific world do to me if I should go into this investigation and come out converted?"

The old man's eyes twinkled and his mustache writhed in silent enjoyment. "Burn you alive, as we did Bent and Zöllner."

"Of course you would. What you really want me to do is to go in and smash the whole thing, eh?"

"That's about it."

"Clarke, that crazy preacher, said we men of science were just as dogmatic in our way as the bishops, and I begin to think he's right. We condemn without investigation — we play the heretic, just as they did.

Could you—could any man—go into this thing and not lose standing among his fellows?"

"No." The old figure straightened, and his mustache bristled sternly. "No; he who goes into this arena invites a kind of martyrdom—that is also why I say you, a *young* man—you might live to see your vindication, but I would die in my disgrace as Zöllner did."

So they parted, Serviss admiring his chief's blunt honesty and vast learning, Weissmann busy with the thought that his eyes were failing, and his work nearly done, "and so little accomplished," he sadly added.

Kate met her brother at the door in a kind of fury. "Something must be done for that girl. I have had a perfectly nerve-racking time. We must get her out of that house before they drive her crazy."

The sincerity of her rage froze the smile on his face. "Is it as bad as that?"

"It is as bad as you can imagine. That man Clarke has some kind of baneful influence over her. He seems able to control her by just waving his hand at her. And the mother is such a dear old silly—she trusts to him completely. But go and dress and we will talk it all over. I'm all of a-tremble yet with what I've seen. I feel as if I had been to an insane asylum and witnessed a strangling."

He went away to his room, deeply perturbed, resentful of all this ill-regulated human nature which could so upset his sane sister and come between his own mind and his work. He believed in orderly and

humorous human life. Why should this teasing, tormenting girl from the mountains come with her trances and tricks to make life furious and antic where it had been amusing and accountable? To what would a closer acquaintance lead? What would become of his studies if he gave himself to her case? "To disillusionment, I sincerely hope," he said.

As he joined his sister at dinner, he began, "Well, now, sis, I'll listen."

Kate had lost a little of her excitement under the influence of her toilet-table, but she was still tense and flushed, as she hesitated, her heart overflowing with sisterly admiration, so handsome, so strong, and so very established did Morton appear at the moment. His tone still further calmed and reassured her, and she began:

"In the first place, I like the girl very much; she is very pretty and much more *au fait* than you had led me to suppose. Her manner is extremely good. The mother is dear and sweet, but deluded. Clarke and that old man Pratt ought to be in an asylum—or the calaboose."

Morton laughed harshly. "Your succinct statement puts me in complete possession of the case. They're all fakirs together."

"No, I didn't mean that. They're all fanatics. You should see the spirit-paintings and the slate-writings in that house! It was like a journey to a far country. Really, Morton, it staggers belief to think that within twenty blocks of where we sit such

a man and such a home can exist. They *do* exist, and it only makes me realize how small a part of the city we know, after all. And some things I heard there to-day make me wonder if science *isn't* shutting its eyes—as these people say—to a world right under its nose. Morton, those people *believe* what they talk. That girl is honest; she may be self-deceived, but her sufferings are real. I can't believe that she is wicked."

"Weissmann practically advised me to go into a study of these morbid conditions."

"He did? Well, that from Rudolph Weissmann, after what I've *seen* to-day, unsettles my reason. Maybe those people really have a message. But, Morton, you really must do something for that girl. Her condition is pitiful. One of the plans of that lunatic Clarke is to issue a challenge to the world of science and to throw that girl into the arena for you scientists to tear."

Morton started—stared. "No! Not a public challenge."

"Isn't it pitiful? Yes, he's going to speak on the second of next month at the Spirit Temple, and he's going to publicly describe Viola's powers, and, as her manager, challenge the world to prove her false."

As Morton's mind flashed over the consequences of this challenge, his face paled. "Good God, what an ordeal! But the girl, does she consent?"

"She does and she doesn't. As a sweet, nice child she shrinks from it; but as a 'psychic,' as they call her, she has no choice. These inner forces seem able to

take her by the throat any minute. They seized her while I was there. Morton, she impersonated Aunt Dosia, and delivered the most vindictive message—she scared me blue. You never saw anything more dramatic—more awful."

"What was the message?"

"Something about a debt she wanted us to pay. She was furious about it. I don't know of any debt; do you?"

"No. How did the message come?"

As Kate described it, the impersonation grew grotesque, lost much of its power to horrify, and Morton, though he writhed at thought of the girl's depravity, blamed the mother and Clarke for it. Kate made end by saying: "It *was* horrible to see, and it startled me. Then the other messages, those written ones, came through her hand—"

"Automatic writing, they call it. That has no value—none whatever. The whole programme was arranged for your benefit."

"No, it wasn't. The girl was carried out of herself. She is somehow enslaved by Clarke, and she wants help. She wants to be investigated; but she wants it done privately. She wants you to do it. She begs you to do it."

"Begs me?" His eyebrows lifted.

"Yes, she passionately desires your advice. The poor thing made an appeal that would have touched your heart. She wants to be cured of this horrid thing—whatever it is. She wants to escape from

Pratt and Clarke and all the rest of those queer people. You must take it up, Morton. *You* must make up a committee and take charge of her."

"Clarke is mad. No reputable man of science will go on such a committee. The girl will fall into the hands of notoriety-seekers—men of position do not meddle with such questions."

Kate flared forth. "Why don't they? It is their duty just as much as it is Viola's duty to offer herself. That is where I lose patience with you men of science. Why *don't* you meet these people half-way? Women wouldn't be such bigots—such cowards. If you don't help this poor girl I'll consider you a bigot and coward with the rest."

"Your whole position is most feminine," said Morton, arguing as much against himself as against Kate. "You've only seen this girl once—you have witnessed only one of her performances, and yet you are ready to champion her before the world. I wish you'd tell me how you arrived at a conviction of her honesty. Think of it! She assumes to be the mouthpiece of the dead. The very assumption is a discredit."

"I don't care; she has good, honest, sweet eyes."

"I bow to the force of the eyes, but over against her claim I put the denials of science. The phenomena these fanatics base their hopes upon science has already proven to be tricks, illusions, deceits."

"I don't care, her story, her own attitude towards the thing, convinced me that she is *honest*."

"It's the rogue who looks like a gentleman who runs the longest race."

"Well," ended Kate, rather helplessly, "see her—see her before you condemn her."

"But I *have* seen her—I've spent more days in her company than you have hours."

Kate looked at him with new interest. "You didn't tell me that before. You said you'd met her casually."

"She is enormously interesting, but"—his voice changed to earnest protest—"but, Kate, the thing the girl claims to be is out of key with all organized human knowledge. It is a survival of the past. It belongs to a world of dreams and portents. It is of a piece with the old crone's tales, fortune-telling, palmistry, and all the rest of the hodge-podge or hocus-pocus which makes up the world of the unlearned. I've given a great deal of thought to her fate. My heart bleeds for her, but what can I do? She really needs the care of a great physician, like Tolman. She should be snatched from her unwholesome surroundings and sent away to Europe or back to her hills. When I saw her last she was as sweet and blithe as a bobolink—we were on the trail together, so far above the miasma of humankind that her girlhood seemed uncontaminated by any death-affrighted soul. Why don't she go back? She is vigorous and experienced in travel. Her step-father is not poor; he is rich. Why don't she pull away and go back to her valley?"

"Do you know what a 'control' is?"

"I believe that is the name they give the particular spirits which assume to advise and guide a medium. Why?"

"Well, that poor thing is in mortal terror of her 'control,' who is her grandfather. She was quite defiant till Clarke reminded her that her guide would cut her down in her tracks if she refused. Then she wilted—went right off into death-like sleep. It was pitiful to see her. Clarke was terrible when he said it—he is a regular Svengali, I believe, and the mother is completely dominated by him. One of the spooks is her own father, the other her first husband. It seems that they are willing to sacrifice the girl to *their* science, for it seems they are leagued to dig a hole through to us from their side, and Viola is their avenue of communication. Then, too, the girl believes in it all. She rebels at times, but she has been having these trances ever since she was ten years old." As the memory of the mother's tale freshened, Kate changed her tone. "You needn't tell me, Morton Serviss, that these people are frauds. They may be mistaken, but they're horribly in earnest. They believe in those spirits as you do in germs, and Viola is absolutely helpless in their hands, if you can say they have hands. They can throw her into a trance at any moment. They've made her life a misery. She is absolutely enslaved to them."

"That, too, could be a delusion—medical science is full of cases of auto-hypnotism."

"Viola Lambert is not a medical case. It's aston-

ishing what a blooming beauty she is in the midst of it all. In fact, her health gives Clarke and the mother an argument—they say 'it hasn't hurt her, you see.' But what future has the poor girl? Think of going through life in that way!"

Morton's eyes were sad as he said: "Her future is a dark one, from our point of view, but she may be earning a crown to be given in the land of shadows. She is beautiful, but it is the beauty of a blighted flower."

Kate regarded him with affectionate eyes. "I don't wonder that she has bewitched you, Morton. She can never be anything to you, of course. But we must help her, just the same, and I confess I am crazy to see one of her 'performances,' as you call them." Her face lightened. "How would it do to invite them to dinner and have a séance afterwards? You could judge then of her truth."

"Sacrifice her to make *our* holiday, eh? Kate, I thought better of you than that. Isn't that precisely the poor girl's complaint that everybody wants to use her as a sort of telephone connection with the other world? No. If you invite her here, receive her as a lady, not as a pervert. But, now, let us see. You say Clarke is going to issue his challenge soon?"

"On the second."

"And that she has consented?"

"Consented? Poor thing, she has no choice."

"If he issues that challenge, she is lost." His brows knitted. "To defy the world of science in that way

will make her fair game for every charlatan in the city. The press will unite to destroy her. I will see Clarke and Pratt myself. For the sake of their own cause they must not enter on such a foolish plan. Unless this life has already eaten deep into the essential purity of the girl's nature, she will be corrupted. This public-test business will drive her into all kinds of artifices and shifts. Her exposure will be swift and sure. Yes, I will see Clarke. If necessary I will undertake to secure a purely private investigation of her claims—"

Kate rose and came round to his chair. "Will you? Oh, that will be good of you, Mort. I can't begin to tell you how that girl's face has worked on me to-day. I feel that it would be criminal in you not to do something when she expects it of you. She looks to us to save her. She passionately desires your help. Go over there to-morrow. Don't delay; they may issue that challenge any minute. Clarke was angry and alarmed at my attitude, and may send out the notice to-night. Do go, Morton. You can't afford to stand on ceremony when a soul is in danger."

He rose. "Very well, I will go; but I never embarked on an enterprise that seemed more dangerous, more futile. My heart says go, but my reason is against it."

"Follow your heart in this instance."

"If I did that wholly, I would go straight to this dragon's den and snatch the fair maiden home to my castle."

"That would be romantic, but a little too daring, even for my enthusiasm."

"You may be reassured. No one really follows the heart in these days—at least, those who do land in jail or the almshouse."

As he lit his cigar he observed that his hand trembled. For the first time in his life his nerves were over-charged and leaping with excitement just above control.

VII

THE SLEEPING SIBYL

THE following evening, after much debate with himself, Serviss, armored in scientific reflection, set forth towards the unknown country wherefrom his sister had brought report of a maiden dwelling in the power of giants, pitiably ensnared by evil-minded enchanters. The errand, in Kate's mind, was as chivalric as any of the olden time, but the knight's progress was lit by the green and red lamps of trade, and threaded only the brazen jungles of traffic. For dragons he had but the overhead monsters of iron and brass—monsters too intent on their own mad game to take account of such small deer as this footman picking his road beneath. It was half-past eight of the night-watch.

Serviss began to realize that his reawakened interest in this girl was not purely impersonal and scientific. It had become, indeed, a most disquieting, intimate concern, and every step towards the West sharpened the sense of his folly. Had it not been for the memory of that ride up the mountains—his keen remembrance of that day of joyous youth—he could have easily dismissed Viola's case from his mind; but as he permitted himself to dwell upon her rosy, rain-wet face, her bird-

like ecstasy of voice, her splendid defiance of the sun and wind, a desire that was as fierce as anger actuated him, making his proffer of aid not a gallantry but a duty. "I will defend her from herself. Though a liar, she is still worth redemption. In a certain sense the despicable rôle she is playing has been forced upon her."

As he mounted Simeon's steps he observed that awnings covered the adjacent carriage-block, and that some young people, all in party dress, were entering—a merry, chattering group—whereas the Pratt mansion towered gloomily, unlighted, unalluring as a prison.

He was about to touch the bell when the door opened and a porter softly greeted him. "The meeting has begun, sir. Step right in, sir. This way, sir. Softly, please."

Before he was fairly aware of his attendant's meaning Serviss found himself thrust through a heavily curtained archway into a large room dimly lighted by a single lamp at the farther end. It contained about twenty people, and he hesitated in embarrassment and some amazement at the threshold.

Beneath the light, on a reclining-chair, lay a woman with closed eyes and folded hands. Beside this figure stood Clarke in the midst of an address, every word of which was made dramatically effective by a forced calmness, an elocutionary trick.

"Some of you, my friends, may never have seen any of these mysterious things. So many people say to me, 'Nothing supernatural ever happens where I am.'

To you I repeat my answer to them. Have you ever tried to enter the right conditions? Here is a caravan of Arabs on the desert. The road, hard-beaten, is wide and dusty, the necks of the camels sway, the drivers shout, there is the smell of sweat, of leather, of oil. The alkaline dust blinds and blisters. Physical weariness and suffering shut out all else. This is no place to look for heavenly visitors. You would be a fool to expect a demonstration there. But at night when the beasts are at rest, when the cool, starry sky bends close, when the tent-flaps are closed, then the old men sit about and commune with their dead—as all primitive, natural peoples do.

"So with you. You say to me, 'I have no heavenly visions in my life.' I answer: Do you expect them on Broadway or in your business office? You are on the dusty, weedy, noisy high-road, my friends, and you will never hear a spirit voice or catch the flutter of a hand till you retire to the dusk and the quiet. Enter the land of meditation. Manifest a willingness to meet the angel visitors half-way, and then the wings of the unseen will rustle about you, the cool and scented winds of the invisible universe will kiss your cheeks. Shadowy voices will be wafted from the dark. Song will break from the silences to comfort and heal you.

"We see only what we *will* to see—that is a known law of psychology. Electricity was a force in the world six thousand years before man really saw it. Now we hear it crackle in our hair and stir in our garments.

By studying the conditions of its manifestation we are able to call it forth in giant power. So of these invisible ones—they are all about us, eager to bless, to prove their presence. They are here now. Around each one of you there are throngs hovering to manifest their love; they will do so, by the aid of this wonderful psychic who has consented to sit for us to-night. Let me repeat that she does this because the dead demand and the living beseech her to act as their intermediary." With abrupt, almost ludicrous change to a matter-of-fact tone, he added, "Henry, turn the light a little lower."

As the attendant glided to his task, Serviss was mightily moved to rise in his seat and cry out against the foolish, profaning business. They were putting the girl into the exact attitude of the paid trickster. At college he had attended a few of these séances, where vulgar and immoral women had furthered their trade; and to see Viola, whom he still believed to be essentially sweet, or at least reclaimable, thrown into this most dubious posture, disgusted and angered him. "But I am an uninvited guest. My rising would precipitate a scene, involving Viola," he reasoned, and so kept his seat, though his hands clinched and his teeth set with the effort at control.

Some one commenced to play softly upon a harp, and a little sigh like a breeze passed over the group. The women had begun to respond to the manager's emotional appeal. "I can feel them gathering," he called, softly, from his seat beside the motionless girl.

"The spirit host are about us. I can almost hear the rustle of their wings."

The harpist stopped abruptly, and an echoing strain of faint music continued to sound, seemingly from the ceiling—a fairy harp exquisitely clear. "That is my Adele," announced Clarke, in a voice so convincing in its tone of satisfied longing that the women of his audience again rustled with ecstasy.

"I think he is beautiful!" exclaimed one.

"A voice is whispering to me," Clarke continued. "It is asking for some one—I cannot quite make out. Who is it? Again, please. Morton Serviss?" His voice rose in surprise. "He is not here. You are surely mistaken. Certainly, I will ask. Is Professor Serviss here?"

Serviss replied, with a slight note of annoyance in his voice, "Yes, I am here."

Again the little group shivered with excitement—not because they were acquainted with the name and fame of the scientist, but because they anticipated some especially wonderful manifestation of the psychic's power. Serviss, irritated and puzzled, waited in silence.

Clarke's voice trembled with his effort to appear calm as he said: "Professor Serviss, I am glad to welcome you. Won't you please come forward? The 'control' desires it."

For a full minute, in dead silence, Serviss debated the matter, then rose to comply. Mrs. Lambert met him with cordial hand, saying, in a whisper: "We did not

know you were coming; but they knew. They want you closer to the manifestation."

He, sick at heart at her connivance in the trick, made no reply, but silently took the seat which Clarke indicated.

Viola lay as silent as a statue, her face faintly showing, a diamond in her corsage emitting a momentary gleam as she breathed tranquilly at long intervals. There was nothing of the professional sibyl in her dress, and her tall figure was very beautiful in this attitude of deep sleep.

Clarke, mindful of effect, made explanation: "Professor Serviss, as many of you know, is renowned in science, and the 'controls' are especially anxious that he shall have the best possible opportunity to hear and see. Will you play again, Mrs. Robinson?"

As the harp resumed its sadly sweet pulsations, the dead matter in the room seemed to awake. Cracklings, snappings, as of a fire-log, arose from the carpet. Rappings resounded from the walls. The piano began to thrill as if a roguish child were thumping it.

"That's my little boy," whispered Mrs. Lambert.

Clarke shut off the light above his head till it was but a faint point of yellow light, and then a hand, firm and broad, was laid for an instant on Serviss's shoulder. Stars of phosphorescent fire floated about. A small hand fluttered in a caress about the face of the sleeping girl.

"That is her father's hand," again murmured Mrs. Lambert.

Serviss was willing to believe the girl's trance real, and that she had no part in the hocus-pocus up to this point; but even as he leaned forward to peer into the faintly visible face of the sleeper a voice, breathy yet metallic, as though coming through the horn of a phonograph, sounded in his ear. "Be not so doubting, my boy. I, too, doubted."

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Loggy," answered the voice, with a chuckle.

This answer, so unexpected, this chuckle, so familiar, startled him, for it was his pet name for an uncle, a professor of mathematics who used to call himself "Old Logarithms" when in play with his nephews; but, before Serviss had time to put out his hand, the horn came down softly on his head, then withdrew, and a boyish voice laughed in his ear, "You're a dunce!"

Mrs. Lambert bent towards him. "Did some dear one speak to you? I hope so. We are so anxious to have you one of us."

He did not reply, for a third voice, seemingly that of an old man, was issuing from the horn in pompous, stolid, old-fashioned utterance. "The reality of all you see, young man, can be proven. Set yourself to the grand task of destroying all fear of the change men call death. Science is hopeless. We alone can save the world from despair."

"That is my father," explained Mrs. Lambert, "he is my daughter's chief 'control.' He cares for her—teaches her."

Again the floating horn passed Morton's face, and a boyish voice called, "Mamma, are you happy?"

"Yes, dear, when you are with me."

"We're always with you. We're glad P'ofessor Serviss came."

"So are we, Waltie."

"Papa says, 'Tell him to watch—tell him—to be patient—'" The voice hesitated, murmured, and was silent, then added, plaintively: "Oh, dear, there are so many who want to talk—they take my strength away. Good-bye."

The horn dropped with a clang, but was at once caught up and floated away over the circle. Dear names were whispered, secrets recalled. Loved voices, long stilled by the grave, were heard again. Hands that the earth had covered touched tear-wet cheeks, and with these caresses sobbing outcries burst from the women.

"I believe. Yes, yes! I know you, darling," called a man's voice, and his accent was more moving than the cries of the women.

Pratt, in wistful accents, asked, "Is there no one for me to-night?"

"Yes, father," answered a girl's voice from the megaphone, now hanging almost directly in front of Serviss, "we are all here. I'm going to sing for you—the song you liked the best."

This she did in a far-away voice, sweetly and with excellent vocalization, but the first notes startled Serviss. They were from "The Banks of Loch Lomond,"

the very song Clarke sang to Viola's accompaniment that night in the little cabin in Colorow. "And yet she told me she had no voice!" he said to himself, and a bitter heat overcame the chill of his disgust. "What unconscionable trickery!" This last piece of deception seemed to involve the girl more directly than any other of the evening's accursed jugglery.

Pratt was pleading, brokenly: "My old paw is open, Jennie; put your hand in it—just for a moment—as you used to. I'm so lonely without you. Girls, can't you touch your old father? Give me a kiss—and mother, is she with you to-night?"

"Yes, we're all here. I can't kiss you to-night, father; sometime I will," the gentle voice replied. "I'm not strong enough to-night." There was infinite regret in the tone, which conveyed to Serviss, with singular vividness, a virginal charm, united to something very sweet, almost saintly. Every sentiment had been beautifully voiced—no actress could have done it better.

Clarke spoke gently, solemnly: "Professor Serviss, will you now take a seat beside the psychic. Her 'controls' wish to make some special demonstration for you."

With reluctance and loathing, the young scientist moved forward, guided by the mother, and placed his seat at the right side of Viola, whose daintily robed, graceful figure he could still detect. Her wrists appeared to be lying on the broad arms of her reclining-chair and her head was turned away from him. She seemed very

feminine, very lovely, and very helpless, and he had a definite and powerful desire to take her in his arms, to wake her, to snatch her from this most revolting drama of the dark.

He was now seated directly between the sibyl and Clarke,. her manager, and every sense was keenly awake. A tapping, metallic sound at once arose either upon his chair or Viola's, and the horn, or whatever it was, floated dimly into view, then vanished, and a moment later the voice of the chief "control" entered his right ear: "Man of science, do not shirk your duty. Here now we offer you a chance to solve the great mystery. Will you accept?"

To this he made no answer, for his widely opened eyes were strained in the effort to locate Viola's hands, eager to determine her part in the phenomena, and as the moving megaphone again touched his right temple he laid a quick hand lightly on her white wrist.

She leaped convulsively with a gasping cry, the horn tumbled to the floor with prodigious clatter, and the women all shrieked and rose to their feet.

"Fool! What have you done?" cried Clarke, in a terrible voice.

Serviss's tone expressed only contempt as he answered, "No great harm, I think."

The clergyman pushed him aside rudely, and knelt beside the girl, who was writhing and moaning in her chair, as though contorted with pain.

Words of indignation arose from the circle, and one or two shouted, "Run him out! He has no business

here." But Clarke cried out, in a commanding voice: "Remain where you are, friends! Be quiet for a few minutes." They obeyed, and Serviss was about to withdraw when Pratt confronted him. "What do you mean? Do you want to kill the psychic?"

The mother was bending above her daughter with soothing words. "There, there, dearie! It will soon pass. You may turn on the light, Anthony."

Clarke turned the cock of the burner till a faint glow revealed the girl, white, suffering, her left side convulsed. "You can't do things like that," he went on, addressing himself to Serviss. "In these trances the nervous system is in a state of enormous tension. The psychic must not be mishandled."

"I merely touched her arm," answered Serviss, quietly.

The mother answered: "The lightest touch is sufficient to convulse her, professor. You should have asked permission of the 'control,' then it would not have shocked her."

"I hope it has done no lasting harm." His voice, in spite of himself, took on sympathy, though he believed the girl's shock to have been grossly exaggerated for some reason of her own. "I thought I was invited to make the test."

The mother's calm voice was thrilling as she said: "She's better now. You may turn the light on full."

Viola was a most appealing figure as she bloomed from the dark, pure and pale as a lily. She was dressed exquisitely in white, and seemed older, more worldly

wise, and more bewitching than when he had last seen her; but with a feeling of profound contempt and bitterness Serviss shrank from meeting her gaze. He slipped away into the hall and out of the house—back into the cool, crisp air of the night, ashamed of himself for having yielded again to the girl's disturbing lure, burning with disappointment, and sad and grieving over the loss of his last shred of respect for her.

"Britt was right," he exclaimed, drawing a deep breath as if to free his lungs of the foul air of deceit. "They are all frauds together," and with this decision came a sense of relief as well as of loss.



"'WHAT DO YOU MEAN? DO YOU WANT TO KILL THE PSYCHIC?'"

VIII

KATE'S INTERROGATION

KATE, waiting impatiently in her turn, met him at the door. "Well, did you see her? What did she say?" Her voice rose in excitement, for she perceived unusual gravity in the lines of his face.

"Your 'far country' lies on the borders of hell," he replied, with disconcerting succinctness. "Yes, I saw her—or, rather, the ruin of her."

She recoiled before this tone. "What do you mean?"

He shook himself free of his coat. "She has descended swiftly. She now lends herself to the shallowest, basest trickery."

"I don't believe it. What has happened to make you so bitter?"

"I will tell you presently," he replied, hanging up his hat with aggravating deliberation. "But not here. Come to the library." He led the way and she followed quite meekly, for she perceived in him something new and harsh. She sat quite still while he filled his pipe and lit it, waited until the soothing flow of smoke through its stem had softened his face. He began, sadly: "The girl has gone beyond our interference, Kate; and if she weren't so pretty, if I hadn't seen her

when she was wholesome and altogether charming, I would not have wasted this evening on her. To-night's doings were unforgivable."

"Did she give you a sitting?"

"No, but they were in the midst of a *séance*"—he spoke this word with infinite disgust—"and the usher, mistaking me for an invited guest, thrust me into the very centre of the circle."

"How lucky! I wish I had been there."

"Well, that's as you look at it. When I realized what was going on I wanted to leave, and, I repeat, had the chief actress been an old hag or the usual sloven who plays this game, I would have fled; but she was as beautiful as a statue as she lay there, professedly in deep trance."

"You're sure it was Viola?"

"I wish there were a doubt! Yes, she was there, surrounded by a group of Pratt's friends, giving a *performance*." This word, too, expressed his contempt, his pain. "She went the whole length—lent herself to the cheapest kind of jugglery, playing with horrible adroitness upon the emotions of a lot of bereaved men and women. It was revolting, Kate. It shakes one's faith in humanity to see such a girl in such a position—and that nice-appearing old mother sat there serene as a tabby-cat while her daughter bamboozled a dozen open-faced ninnies."

"Tell me exactly what happened; I can't share your horror till I know what the girl actually did."

He approached the details with a grimace.

"First of all, imagine a little half-circle of well-dressed men and women, in a big drawing-room, enclosing a girl lying on a low chair under a single gas-jet, and a man standing beside her speechifying."

"That was Clarke, of course."

"Of course. Then imagine the light turned down, and the usual floating guitar—in the dark, of course—and rappings and whispers and the touch of hands—all in the dark. Then imagine—this will make you laugh—some kind of horn or megaphone of tin, that rambled around invisibly, distributing voices of loved ones here and there like sweetmeats out of a cornucopia—"

"You mean the spirits *spoke* through that thing?"

"That's what they all believed."

"But you don't think the girl—"

"Who else? Some of the voices were women's and one or two were children's. Clarke couldn't do the children's voices."

"I can't believe it of her! Clarke must have done them. He's capable of anything, but I don't, I won't believe such baseness of that girl."

"It hurts me to admit it, Kate, but I am forced to believe that she not only sang through that horn to-night, but that she lied to me. She told me once that she had no voice, and yet 'by request' she sang into that horn, and very sweetly, too, the very song to which she played an accompaniment when Clarke and I met for the first time. The effrontery of it was confounding."

"Maybe there was a confederate."

"That doesn't sweeten the mess very much."

"No, and yet it wouldn't be quite so bad. But go on—what else?"

"Then I was invited by the 'controls'—so Clarke said—to come up and sit beside the medium, which I did, very loathly. It gave me a keen pang to look down on that lovely creature pretending to sleep, knowing perfectly well that she was planning some deep deception."

"You *are* bitter. What next?"

"I took a seat beside her, determined to see if she really had a hand in the deception. I thought I could prevent anything happening."

"Did you?"

"No. Everything went on quite as briskly as before, and all the while I thought I could see her arms lying limp along her chair—lovely arms they were, too. She isn't poor, you must understand that, Kate; and that really makes the crime worse, for she has not the usual excuse — she is not doing it for her daily bread."

Kate sat like a judge. "Go on. You seized her, of course?"

"Yes; just when the cone was emitting an old man's pompous harangue I laid my hand on her arm. The horn dropped, the circle rose in confusion, and I came away."

"I expected you'd do that. All sceptics do, I believe. But I want to know *all* that took place. You're

so concise. You say the cone emitted a man's voice. Now, how could—"

"It produced the *impression* of a man's voice. It is easy to deceive under such conditions. The cone was passed from her hand to Clarke's at the proper moments, and, as you say, there might have been a child—"

"You must not infer, Mort—my faith in that girl is at stake. Was there nothing in her favor? Nothing that justified her claim?"

He hesitated and Kate leaned forward in excess of interest. "Go on, Morton, be honest."

"Well, now, as I think of it there was one little thing which was rather curious. I don't know how she or Clarke or any one there should know what we used to call Uncle Ben."

"What? Did you get a message from him?"

"A voice from the megaphone asked for me, and when I requested the name of 'the party speaking,' as Clarke says, it replied with an oily chuckle, exactly like the old duffer, '*It's old Loggy.*'"

"It did?" Her voice was sharp with surprise. "Well, now, that is as wonderful as my experience. How do you account for *that?* How *do* you account for such things?" she repeated, insistently.

"Clarke must have known—"

"Nonsense. No one outside our immediate family knows of that nickname. Besides, how would he know the way 'Loggy' laughed? I'd forgotten it myself."

"So had I. But what would you say? Would you jump to the conclusion—"

"*You* are jumping at the conclusion, Mort. If there is one single thing that you can't understand, you must give that girl the benefit of the doubt. What did 'Loggy' say?"

"There you go! You're ready to swallow the whole lump of humbuggery, just because there is one little puzzling plum in it."

Kate was not to be put down. "What did uncle *say?*"

He submitted. "Nothing else. Like most of those dead folk, he was there just to manifest, not to impart wisdom."

Kate leaned back in her chair and grew thoughtful. "Morton, that was wonderful. No one knew you were coming, no one knew you except those people, and they're from the other end of the earth—and yet *somebody* speaks, using a pet name we've both forgotten. Now, I call that a most important thing to dwell upon. How can *you*, a scientist, overlook it?"

"But you must remember all this happened in the house of jugglery. There is no value in a performance of that kind. There was no test applied. Confederates had full opportunity to come and go. To have weight with me these wonders must take place under conditions of my making, not theirs."

"That's what she wants."

"I don't believe it. Pardon me, Kate, but you've been taken in. Whatever this girl was two years ago,

she is now a part of Clarke's scheme, which is to secure a tremendous lot of advertising and then—emit a book."

Kate transfixed him with a finger. "Morton Serviss, there is nothing so convincing as a tone. I know that girl is honest — she may be deceived, she may be made a tool of, unconsciously, by Clarke, but she does not wilfully deceive. I will not let you off with this experience; you must see her in private—talk with her as I did."

"I will have nothing further to do with her or hers," he replied, with determined quiet, knocking the ashes from his pipe. "I have other and better business in the world."

"I don't believe it is better business. Now, wait a moment, I have something to tell of my own evening. While you were gone I 'phoned Uncle Harrison and Aunt Nancy about that debt of my great-aunt—who came to me through Viola to-day; they knew nothing about it, but they set to work looking over her old papers, and found that there was a sealed letter addressed to a doctor in Michigan, and in the letter was a check made out to him and which she intended to send him. Now, what do you think of that?"

"I don't see that that has any necessary connection with your experience this afternoon."

"But it does. I'm sure of it. Auntie felt grateful to this young doctor and wanted to reward him. Morton, it was a big check!" She uttered this impressively.

"Was it? How much?"

"Five thousand dollars."

He faced her with a whistle of surprise. "Well, well! that isn't so amusing. Are we to pay it? Is that the idea?"

"If I am sure—if the letter is what they 'phoned it to be, we've got to pay it. I'm her sole legatee, and she was very angry because it hadn't been paid; but that's not the really important part. How did Viola Lambert know of that letter—and that check?"

He was deeply impressed, and did not try to conceal it. "That is very puzzling; but it may be a case of mind-reading, which, I believe, the modern psychologists admit has been proved." He began to muse. "It may be, as Weissmann says, that there is always some basis for a claim such as Clarke makes for this girl. It may be that she has a faculty for reading what lies in the brain of another—"

"Morton Serviss, you shall not condemn that girl unheard. You have taken Britt's word about her, and you've listened to my story, but you must see her yourself and talk with her alone, so that she will be free to tell you just how she feels."

"No. I am going to bed and try to forget the whole disconcerting group."

"That's the way with you scientists. You'll pursue the tail of a comet—or a germ—till you're black in the face, but when something really important to the human race comes under your nose you can't see it."

"You're forceful but not elegant, sis."

"I'm out of all patience with you."

He laughed. "Good-night."

"I hope that girl's face will haunt you," she replied.

It did. From the moment he turned off his light his mind leaped into the most restless activity. Taking up the scroll of the night's events, he read and re-read it with minutest care. A voice seemed to present the girl's case, arguing that she had no conscious part in the manifestations. "It is possible for one in deep trance to rise and manipulate horns, bells, and guitars at the suggestion of another precisely as a somnambulist walks without intention of wrong-doing, without conscious knowledge of what is being done. She might have had a veritable hand in to-night's drama and still be innocent. Hypnotism is now pretty thoroughly proven—and to Clarke you must look for the real offender.

"The human brain, which is marvellous enough when in health and singing merrily forward like a cunningly constructed and jewelled time-piece, becomes, in disease, as baffling, as hopeless of solution as the laws of the unfathomable sky. Beyond the utmost sweep of the imagined lies the marvel of fact. The beliefs, the vagaries, the hallucinations of the insane have never been co-ordinated, perhaps they never will be. It is possible that this girl, so normal in appearance, has a rotten strand in her—some weakness inherited from her father. This is the only way in which to account for her glowing physical health and her manifest mental disorder. She has her father's mind in a body

drawn from her mother. One-half of her is pure and sweet and girlish, the other is old, decayed, lying, and irresponsible. Can she be reclaimed?

"It is now known that the conscious mind is but a pin's-point of the mind's activity, the conscious state being but one of an infinite number of possible states—that the submerged, unconscious self is a million times more complex than the chain of those conscious states which makes up the normal or orderly life of an individual. May it not be that this girl, by reason of her long practice of submission—induced by others—has dethroned her conscious, higher self, making of her subliminal self a tyrant? This submerged self, holding, as it does, all the experiences of the dark past, all the lusts, deceits, and subterfuges, all the cruelties and shameless potentialities of her animal and semicivilized forebears, and being but a mass of discordant impulses—states almost entirely disassociated from her conscious life—has all but taken possession of her higher self. The restraint of the later-developed, governing, moral self being weakened, the witches and wolves are leaping forth to vex and destroy. Over this fortuitous subversion of her soul's kingdom Clarke now rules like a demon councillor.

"Considered in the light of a study in morbid psychology, her case is enthralling. From the standpoint of human pity this use of her is a diabolical outrage. Suppose Kate to be right—suppose the girl has awakened to a full realization of her danger? Suppose that her cry for succor is real, can I, can any man

who hears it, refuse to heed? Would I ever sleep in peace again?"

He went further, he admitted that her beauty was the deciding element. "She is too lovely to be left to a fanatic's designs. She has matured in body, grown more womanly, since we rode the trail together; may it not be that her mind, maturing even more rapidly, has come to perceive the crumbling edge of the abyss before it stands and turns to science as the only rescuer? No matter what her past deceptions have been, is it not my duty to help her?"

His anger and contempt dissolved into compassion. He recalled her youth, her inexperience. "I will at least see her again," he decided, deep in the night. "I will talk with her. I will draw her out. I will study her. All will depend upon her attitude towards me and towards her own soul." And in that softened mood sleep came to him.

IX

VIOLA'S PLEA FOR HELP

MORTON went to his work next morning quite unfitted for an especially delicate piece of dissection which he had in hand. He bungled it, and Weissmann transfixed him with a glare of disapproval. "My boy, these social gayeties do not consort well with science."

The young man smiled to think how wide of the mark his chief was. He held up both hands. "I swear, it shall not happen again." Then, moved by a desire to secure a comment on the curious phenomena of the séance, he related the story of his brief interview with his uncle Ben's ghost. "Now, do you suppose that Clarke, or the 'medium,' could dig around among the dusty, forgotten lumber of my mind and get hold of a queer fact like that nickname?"

"Why go so far round?" inquired Weissmann. "Why not say it was your uncle Ben who spoke?"

"You are joking."

"I am *not* joking. If the facts are as you say, then one explanation is as reasonable as the other."

Serviss was amazed. "You don't really mean it!"

"If you say it was an illusion of the sense of hearing, I agree; but do we not stagger among illusions? Who

so well as we know the illusory nature of every fact? Nothing is stable under our hands. Of what avail to reduce the universe to one substance, as the monists do? We pry, we peer into that substance—it fades like smoke. Forty years I have probed among the cells of the body—the final mystery remains insoluble. Why? Because the atom, the thing once demonstrated 'the final division of matter,' is itself an illusion, made up of the intangible and the imponderable. This I have given my whole life to discover. Life is an illusion—why not death? Shall we dogmatize, especially on the one thing of which we know nothing? The spirit world is unthinkable, but so, at the last analysis, is the world of matter."

The young man, believing this to be only the mocking mood of one who knew the argument of the dualists better than they knew it themselves, remained silent, and Weissmann composedly resumed: "The dogmatism of Haeckel is as vain as the assumption of Metchnikoff. We shall forever discover and forever despair. Such is the life of man."

When he went home Morton found a note from his sister saying that she had received a message from Viola and that she would be at home at five. "Now don't fail to go. I have to pour tea for Sally, or I would go with you. I'm crazy to see the girl again. I spent the morning talking the whole thing over with Doctor Safford. She thinks as I do, that the girl is exactly what she claims to be, a *medium*, and that while it is her duty to go on, she ought to be protected

from the vulgar public. We both want you to take her in hand. Certainly there *ought* to be no disgrace in standing as interpreter between the living and the dead. Isn't it just our foolish prejudice? If the girl *can* bring messages from the other world, she ought to be honored above all other women. Seriously, Morton, her plea the other day wrung my heart. I don't want you to get *too* interested in her, of course, but what we call a *disease* may be a God-given power. Think of the way we run after a foolish, vulgar woman who has married into millions, and then think of the way we sniff at this girl because she has some gift which science doesn't understand. If one teenty, tiny bit of what they claim about her is true, science ought to cherish her. As Marion said, if she had discovered a star so far off and so faint it wouldn't matter in the least to any one but a few cranks whether it existed or not, she would be honored all over the world; but as she claims to have discovered something vital to every human soul, she is despised. It is your duty to help her. I had her over the 'phone just now, and her voice was trembling with eagerness as she said, 'Do tell him to please come and see me.'"

This note, so like his sister, so full of her audacities, touched Morton on the quick. It was plain that she was more than half-seas over towards faith in the girl, and quite ready to take her up and exhibit her among her friends. Her use of the word "disease" was intended as a mockery of his theories. He knew that she was quite capable of talking over the 'phone pre-

cisely as she had written (reserve was not her strong point), and that she had undoubtedly given Viola reason to expect him. However, having concluded on his own account to see her once more, Kate's exhortation merely confirmed him in a good intention. "I will confront Clarke, and try to pluck the heart out of this mystery, but I will keep clear of any personal relation with the girl and her mother," he said, as if in answer to his sister's admonition.

It was about five o'clock of the afternoon as he again mounted to Pratt's portico, recalling, as he did so, the dramatic contrasting scenes of the evening before—on this side of the brick wall a communion with the dead, on that the throbbing, gay life of a ballroom. Truly a city street was a microcosm.

A solemn-visaged colored man—not the officious usher of the night before—took his card and led him into a gorgeous, glacial reception-room on the left. The house was very still and cold and gloomy, for the day was darkening and the lights were not yet on. It impressed him as a vast and splendid tomb, and with a revived knowledge of Simeon Pratt's tragic history he chilled with a premonition of some approaching shadow. "What a contrast to the sunlit cabin of the Colorow!" he inwardly exclaimed, and the thought of the mountain girl housed in this grim and sepulchral mansion deepened his wonder.

A gruff voice above inquired: "Who is it? Let me see the card. Serviss, eh? Tell him— No, wait, I'll go down and see him myself."

Morton smiled grimly, realizing perfectly the manner in which Pratt had intercepted his card. "The old watch-dog," he exclaimed.

A heavy tread descending the stairs announced the approach of his host, whose sullen face was by no means engaging as he entered. "Are you Professor Serviss?"

"I am."

The flabby lips curled in scorn. "You are one of those scientific gentlemen who know it all, aren't you?"

"I sent my card to Miss Lambert," replied Serviss, with cutting formality.

Pratt's face darkened. "*I* am the master of this house."

"But not of your guests, I hope."

"I have a right to know who calls, and I intend to protect Miss Lambert from such as you. You were not invited here last night."

"Not by you, I admit. I owe you an explanation for that. I came to call on Miss Lambert. Your man shouldered me into the room before I knew what was going on. I didn't intend to 'butt in,' as they say. I was afterwards invited forward by Mr. Clarke, as you will remember, and later by the 'control.'"

"Clarke is not running things here."

"Ah, but the spirits? Would you question their judgment? They insisted on making me the guest of honor, you will remember. They played to me, you may say."

Pratt was daunted by his visitor's mocking tone. "You should have had more sense of honor than to grab the medium the way you did."

"Being invited to sit near, I took it as an invitation to make a test. I wanted to know who held that horn. How can you hope to convince a sane mind of the truth of such an exhibition as that last night unless you permit tests?"

The colored man had returned. "Miss Lambert will see you, sir. This way, please."

For a moment Pratt meditated interference, but something in the movement and face of the visitor deterred him. As Serviss followed his guide up the great stairway, he asked himself: "What will she be like? She must be changed—deeply changed. How will she meet me?" He acknowledged a growing excitement.

She met him so simply, so cordially, with such frank pleasure, that his own restraint gave way at first glance. In her glowing color, in the tones of her voice, lay a charm which carried him back to Colorow, linking the mature and splendid woman with the unformed girl of the mountain-cabin. He took her hand with a keen thrill of admiration—whatever had come to her she had gained in grace without apparent loss of sincerity.

His eyes disturbed her, and she stammered some commonplace expression of pleasure, and he replied almost as lamely, then turned to the mother. "I hope you have forgiven me for my action of last night?"

Then again to Viola. "I only intended to touch your arm. I trust you suffered no lasting ill effects."

Again something that was at once attraction and repulsion passed between them. She perceived in his tone a note of mockery, involuntary in its expression, but all the more significant on that account.

"I am sorry you were there," she quickly replied. "I don't blame you. No, it did not hurt me—I mean, it was all over in half an hour. The contraction is very painful while it lasts. It's just like a cramp. I didn't intend to give the sitting, but Mr. Pratt requested it for a few of his friends and I couldn't well refuse. I didn't know you were there till mamma told me afterwards. There is no value in such a sitting to you."

With a dim suspicion of her wish to cover some deception, he answered: "My entrance was quite as unpremeditated, I assure you." He spoke with returning humor. "I really came to call upon you, to welcome you to the city and to talk of the West. The usher mistook me for one of the seekers and thrust me bodily into the circle. Please believe that I acted upon sudden impulse in seizing your wrist. I am heartily ashamed of myself. I was an intruder, and had no right, no excuse—although your 'guides,' as you call them, seemed eager to have me sit beside you."

"I do not blame you," she repeated, and fell strangely silent.

He studied her with mounting pleasure. The flower-like line of her lips, her glorious bosom, the poise of her head, all the lines that had meant so much

to him at their first meeting, were there, more womanly, more dangerous in their witchery than ever. For two years their thoughts had subtly crossed and intertwined, and she now felt his doubt, his question, almost as keenly as if he had uttered them.

He broke the momentary silence by saying, with a distinctly tender tone, "Are you thinking of Colorow? I am."

She flushed and started a little. "Yes."

"I was recalling my first view of you—a fragment of sunset cloud caught on a mountain-crag."

Her face grew wistful. "That seems a long time ago to me."

"It doesn't to me. It seems but yesterday. My trip that year was a symphonic poem with a most moving final movement. I have thought of it a thousand times." He paused a moment, then added: "Well, now, here you are in New York, and here I am, and what of your music? I was to advise you, you remember."

Her head lifted in defiance, an adorable gesture. "You know my secret now." It was as if she said, "Come, let us have it over."

He replied, very gently: "I knew something of it then. Dr. Britt told me something of it at the time."

Her eyes bravely searched his. "Was that why you did not come to say good-bye to us?" His glance fell in a wish that she had been less cruelly direct. She went on: "You needn't answer. I'm used to being treated that way. I knew somebody had told you I was a medium. You despised me when you found out

about me—everybody does, except those who want to use me. All the people I really want to know go by on the other side as if I were a leper. It was so in Boston; it is going to be the same here."

Mrs. Lambert interposed. "That is not true, Dr. Serviss. We met many nice people in Boston."

"Yes, mamma—nice people who wanted me to tell their fortunes."

Her tone went to Serviss's heart. She was so young to be so bitter; but he could think of nothing at the moment which would not add to her chagrin, for was not his own interpretation of her quite as hard to bear?

She went on: "No, I don't blame you or any one for avoiding me. But I wish they would let me have one or two friends. But they won't. Lots of people like me at first, but they surely find out after a while, and then they change towards me. Sometimes I think I might as well publish my name as a medium and let everybody know it at once."

"You must not permit that, Miss Lambert," he earnestly said. "That is what I came to say. Don't allow them to use you so."

"How can I help it?" she passionately exclaimed, "when they all demand it—mother, Mr. Clarke, Mr. Pratt, grandfather—everybody. They think I owe it to the world."

"I don't. I think it is your right to say—"

"I have no rights. Listen." She leaned towards him, her face paling, her eyes big and soft and terrified. "I

want you to understand me, Dr. Serviss. You must know all about me." Her voice fell to a husky murmur. "You must know that I can't direct my own life. My 'guides' can do what they please with me. Can you understand that?"

"I confess I cannot."

"It is true. My grandfather insists on these public tests. He is determined to 'convict the men of science,' and Mr. Clarke is only too glad to agree with him. Mother is controlled entirely by what grandfather says. My wishes don't count with anybody. But I think I've done my share in this work." She faced her mother in challenge and appeal. "Ever since I was ten years old I've given myself up to it; but now I'm afraid to go on. I don't want to be a medium all my life. They all say it is hard to change after one is grown up, and I'm afraid," she repeated, with a perceptible shudder.

The mother, undisturbed by this plea, turned to Serviss with an exultant smile. "Does she look like one breaking down?"

The girl rose from her chair like a tragedienne. "It isn't my body, it's my mind!" she cried, with poignant inflection, clasping her head with both her hands; and her look transformed her in the eyes of the young scientist. It was the tragic gaze of one who confronts insanity and death at a time when life should be at its sweetest. For an instant she stood there absorbed in her terror, then dropped her hands, and in a voice of entreaty, which melted all his distrust, hurried on. "I

want to know what is going on in my brain. I am losing control of my *self!* I want some man of science like you to study me. Your sister said you would help me, and you must! You think I deceive—you thought so last night—but I don't. I knew nothing of what went on. I didn't know that you were there. I don't know what I do nor what I am. I want you men of science to investigate me. I will submit to any test you like. You may fasten me in a cage, or padlock me down—anything!—but I will not be advertised to the world as a medium, and I must have rest from this strain. Don't you understand? Can't you see how it will be?"

"I do," he answered, quickly. "I understand perfectly, and I will go at once to see Mr. Clarke and intercede—"

"That is not enough. You must intercede with my grandfather and his band, they are the ones who control me. Ask him to release me."

This request staggered the scientist. "My dear Miss Lambert, you will pardon me, but I can't do that—I do not even believe in the existence of your grandfather."

She stood in silence for a moment and then answered: "You would if his hands were at your throat as they are at mine. He is just as real to me as you are. He is listening this minute."

"That is a delusion."

"I wish it were," she bitterly and tragically answered. "The hands are so real they choke me—that

I know. I am helpless when he demands things of me. He can lead me anywhere he wants me to go. He can use my arms, my voice, as he wills. You must believe in him to help me. He will listen to you, I feel that." She grew appealing again. "Your sister believes in me — I am sure of that — and my heart went out to her. Sometimes it seems as if all the world, even my own mother, were willing to sacrifice me."

"Viola!" cried Mrs. Lambert, sharply. "You shall not say things like that."

"They're true. You know they're true!" the girl passionately retorted. "You all treat me as if I had no more soul than a telephone."

"That is very unjust," declared Mrs. Lambert. "This is only one of her dark moods, doctor. You must not think she really means this."

The girl's brows were now set in sullen lines which seemed a profanation of her fair young face. "But I *do* mean it, and I want Dr. Serviss to know just what is in my heart." Her voice choked with a kind of helpless, rebellious anger as she went on: "I'm tired of my life. I am sick of all these moaning people that crowd round me. It's all unnatural to me. I want to touch young people, and have a share in their life before I grow old. I want to know healthy people who don't care anything about death or spirits. It's all a craze with people anyway—something that comes after they lose a wife or child. They are very nice to me then, but after a few weeks they despise me as the dust under

their feet—or else they make love to me and want to marry me."

Mrs. Lambert rose. "I will not allow you to go on like this, Viola. I don't understand you to-day. You'll give Dr. Serviss a dreadful opinion of us all."

"I don't care," the girl recklessly replied, "I am going to be honest with Dr. Serviss. I don't like what I do, and I don't intend to trust my whole life to the spirits any longer. They may all be devils and lying to us. I don't believe my own grandfather would be so cruel as to push me into this public work."

Mrs. Lambert again warned Serviss from taking this outburst too seriously. "She is possessed, doctor. Some bad spirit is influencing her to say these things to you. She's not herself."

Viola seized on this admission. "That's just it. They've destroyed my own mind so that I don't know my own thoughts. If there are good spirits, there must be bad spirits—don't you think so, Dr. Serviss?"

His eyes did not waver now. His voice was very quiet, but very decisive, as he replied: "My training, my habit of thinking, excludes all belief in the return of the dead either as good spirits or bad, but if there are spirits I should certainly think evil of them if they were to force you into a service you abhor. I do not pretend to pass judgment on your case—I know so little about it—but I do sympathize with you. I deeply feel the injustice of these public tests, and I will do all I can to prevent them."

Mrs. Lambert interrupted: "But, Dr. Serviss, my

father's advice has always been good; to question it now would be to question my faith. His wish is my law."

Serviss shrugged his shoulders a little impatiently. "My dear lady, we have no common ground there. The wishes of the dead have no weight with me when set against the welfare of the living. The question which I beg you to consider is whether you wish your daughter to continue in this mental torture? Do you want her name blazoned to the world as a public medium? You cannot afford to add disgrace to her private torment."

The mother held her ground. "Her 'guides' say she will be taken care of, and as for the disgrace, that is all imaginary. It is an honor—"

Viola again burst forth: "They are always talking to me about the honor of being a medium, about the distinction of it, and when I ask what distinction the world gave to the Fox sisters or Home or Madame Cerillio, they answer that the world has changed since then. But it has not changed enough to make my work respected. Mr. Clarke says it ought to be; but saying so does not make it so. Every time I read of a medium exposed I turn cold and hot, for I know people consider all mediums alike. I don't want to go about all my life like an outcast. I don't want to be happy after I'm dead; I want to be happy now. I don't want to be different from other girls; I want to be like them. If they publish me, I will be a medium forever. I will be in constant terror of attack, and

that will drive me insane—they *must* set me free! Dr. Serviss," she pleaded, as if she were the victim of some murderous design, "you are wise and strong. There must be some way for you to help me."

All of Serviss's well-ordered sympathetic phrases failed him as he listened to the storm of her plea and felt the flame of her passionate protest. All doubt of her sincerity, her own honesty, vanished, being utterly burned away by the light in her lovely eyes. Her mental bondage was real, her desire to escape contamination indubitable. He met her gaze with tender gravity. "I believe in you," he said, as if committing himself to a most momentous enterprise, "and I will help you."

His voice, so manly, so strong, so tender, robbed her of the power to speak. She seized his extended hand in both of hers and pressed it hard, the tears in her eyes veiling her soul from the passion that filled his glance.

As she faced him thus, leaning to him trustfully, so vivid, so magnetic, so much the woman, so little the sibyl, that he forgot all his hesitations and doubts, filled for an instant with an irrational impulse to seize her, claiming her as his own, in defiance of the mandates of her world and the conventions of his own. But she dropped his hand and turned away, and he went out in a maze of conflicting desires, his judgment sadly clouded by the youthful riot in his blood.

At the moment he was in love with her and single-minded in his desire to aid her, to defend her, but the door had hardly closed behind him when his ques-

tionings, his suspicions began to file back, stealthily, silently, along the underways of his brain. Her distress began to seem a little too theatric, her troubles self-induced—all but one—madness did in very truth seem to hover over her, a baleful, imminent shadow.

Clarke, looming darkly, confronted him in the lower hall. "Well met, Dr. Serviss. I'd like a word with you."

"I have a request to make of you," responded Serviss. "Miss Lambert has expressed to me her great distress of mind as concerns the public tests you are planning and has asked me to intercede for her. She profoundly objects to the use of her name, and I ask—"

Clarke's voice was harsh and sullen as he interrupted: "I have considered her objections and find them insufficient."

Serviss's voice rose slightly. "Her lightest objection should be insuperable. I don't understand your point of view. I can't see by what right you ignore the wish of the human soul most vitally concerned in your crusade. You treat her as if she were a rabbit dedicated to the use of a biologic laboratory. I am better informed now than when we met in your church-study, Mr. Clarke. I know, not merely Miss Lambert's secret, but your own. It may be that you honestly think this challenge will confer great distinction upon her, but, let me assure you, it will put an ineffaceable stain upon her. Furthermore, your tests will end in disaster to yourself and to your cause."

"What do you mean by that?" interposed Pratt,

who had come up and stood listening. "Do you doubt her powers?"

"I do. She will fail, and the failure will be crushing. The thing you claim is preposterous. Every time science has taken one of your mediums in hand he or she has suffered extinguishment. It is the grossest outrage to ask this girl to face certain exposure. A challenge of this blatant kind will rouse the most violent antagonism among scientists, and if you succeed in getting any really good man to take it up—which I doubt—he will be merciless."

"We want him to be," declared Clarke. "We glory in your defiance. Let your scientific men come with their bands of steel, their bolts and bars, their telephones, and their electric traps. We defy every material test."

"You are fools—madmen," hotly answered Serviss. "You would sacrifice this girl to a brazen scheme of self-advertising?"

Clarke was contemptuous. "That is your point of view. From our side there is no greater glory than to be an Evangel of the New Faith. What matters the comment of the gross and self-satisfied to us who work for the happiness of those who mourn? The world in which *we* live despises the materialism of yours."

At this moment a new conception of Clarke's plan crossed Serviss's mind. "He is deeper than I thought. He would discredit the girl in the eyes of normal suitors, thereby assuring her to himself." Aloud he said:

"Miss Lambert's right to herself should be your first consideration. She is something more than a trumpet for sounding your fame."

Clarke's resounding voice had drawn Mrs. Lambert from her room, and she now hurried down the stairway with intent to calm him.

Serviss turned to her. "Again I beg of you, Mrs. Lambert, to consider well before you consent to this plan. Your daughter's name will be a jest from one end of the country to the other. It doesn't matter how sincere and earnest you are, the public will regard this challenge as a seeking for notoriety. Your daughter is about to be flung to the beasts." Seeing something unyielding in her eyes, he added, with such intensity his own heart responded: "Will you stake your daughter's reputation, her health, her reason, upon the issue of a voice in the dark?"

"Yes, when the voice is that of her own father. He knows the future. He will protect her. I have no fear."

There was such conviction, such immutable faith in her gentle voice, that Serviss was confounded. When he spoke, in answer, his voice was lower in key, with a cadence of hopeless appeal.

"How do you know these advisers are your husband and your father? You must be very certain of them."

"I am certain. I believe in them as I believe in my own existence." The line of her mouth lost something of its sweetness, and Serviss, seeing this, took another tack.

"Granted these voices are genuine, they may be mistaken—rash with zeal. You wouldn't say that they have gained infallibility—a knowledge of both past and future—merely by passing to the shadow world?"

To this Clarke made answer: "That is precisely what we do believe. They have predicted our future, they have laid out all our plans. Their advice has brought us to our present high place, and we shall continue in our course, despite you or any other doubter."

"They have brought you to a very dubious sort of success," Serviss cuttingly replied. "But what about your victim? I know this city and its ways. I realize, as none of you seem to do, the wasting injustice you are about to inflict. Let me intercede—let me arrange some other plan—"

On Clarke's face a sneering, one-sided smile crept as he answered: "You are too late. Our plans are made, our programme published."

"What do you mean?"

"The reporters have just been here. The notice of my speech and a broad hint of the nature of my challenge will appear in four of the leading papers to-morrow morning—"

"But Viola's—Miss Lambert's name! You surely haven't used that?"

"Oh no. That is to follow. The challenge, with her name and defiance, form the climax to my oration." He swelled with pride as he spoke, as if visualizing himself on the platform, the centre of thousands of eyes, the champion of reviving faith.

"Thank God for your vanity! There is still time for some one to intervene," responded Serviss, minded to thrust him through.

Pratt shouldered in again. "What have you got to do with it, anyway? Who asked you to interfere?"

"The chief person concerned—Miss Lambert herself."

Pratt was about to utter some further insult when Clarke diplomatically interposed. "We want you to have a part in the work, Dr. Serviss. We will welcome you to a committee of investigation, but we cannot permit you to interfere with our plan. The 'Forces' are bent on the work, and they are inexorable."

"It is you who are inexorable," replied the young scientist—"you and this deluded mother."

This rapid dialogue had taken place in the wide hall just beneath the huge chandelier whose light fell on Serviss's white forehead and square, determined face. Pratt was confronting him with lowering brow, a bear-like stoop in his shoulders, and the muttering growl of his voice was again filling the room as Viola appeared upon the great stairway. She came slowly, with one slim hand on the railing, as though feeling her way, and at every step mysterious, jarring sounds came from beneath her feet and from the walls; her eyes were shut, her chin lifted, and on her face, white and tense, lay the expression of a sorrowful dreamer. Her mouth, drooping at the corners, was pitiful to see. All her vivid youth, her flaming rebellion, had been frozen

into soulless calm by the implacable powers which reigned above and beneath her in the dark.

In horror and fierce, impotent rage, Serviss watched her descend. It was plain that she was again in the grasp of some soul stronger than herself; and he believed this obsession, close akin to madness, to be due to a living, overmastering magician—to Clarke, whose voice broke the silence. "There is your answer!" he called, and his voice rang out, with triumphant glee. "Her 'guides' have brought her to show you the folly of human interference. She is only an instrument like myself—clay to the hands of the invisible potters."

Once again a flaming desire to seize the girl with protecting hands filled Serviss's young and chivalric heart; but a sense of his essential helplessness, a knowledge of his utter lack of authority, stayed his arm, while his blaze of resolution went out like a flame in the wind. Sick with horror, he stood till Mrs. Lambert took Viola in her arms, then, in a voice that shook with passion, he said: "Madam, your faith in your spirits passes my understanding. Only devils from hell would demand such torture from a blithe young girl."

And so saying, with shame of his impotence, and with a full realization of Viola's mental bondage to Anthony Clarke, he turned away. "I now understand Britt's words—only the authority of the husband can save her from her all-surrounding foes," and at the moment his fist doubled with desire to claim and exercise that power.

X

MORTON SENDS A TELEGRAM

THE harsh reality of the outside world was like the hard-driven, acrid spray of the ocean in a wintry storm, it stung yet calmed with its grateful, stern menace. A thin drizzle of rain was beginning to fall, and the avenues were filled with the furious clamor of belated traffic. The clangor of the overhead trains—almost incessant at this hour—benumbed the ear, and every side-street rang with the hideous clatter of drays and express-carts, each driver, each motorman, laboring in a kind of sullen frenzy to reach his barn before six o'clock, while truculent pedestrians, tired, eager, and exacting, trod upon one another's heels in their homeward haste.

This tumult of turbulent, coarse, unthinking life seemed at the moment not merely normal but wholesome and admirable by force of contrast with the morbid, unnatural, and useless scenes through which he had just passed. Better to be a burly, unreflecting truckman than a troubled, unresting soul like Anthony Clarke. "Yes, and better for Viola Lambert to be the wife of one of these rude animal types, suffering a life of physical hardship, than to continue the

sport of a man who, having lost the true values out of his own life, is remorselessly distorting those of the woman he professes to love."

His mind then went back, by the same law of contrast, to his momentous ride across the Sulphur Spring trail. "To think on how small a chance my share in this girl's singular history hangs! Had I taken 'the cut-off,' as my guide suggested, had I camped in the log-cabin at the head of the cañon, or had I saddled up the next morning and ridden over to Silver City, as I had planned, we would never have met; and I would not now be involved in her hysterical career."

But he had done neither of these things. He had camped in the town, he had sought her, and in this seeking lay something more than chance. His second meeting was an acknowledgment of his youth and her beauty. She had held him in the village day by day, because she was lithe of body and fair of face and because her eyes were unaccountably wistful. Yes, he had sought her that night when the river sang with joyous, immemorial clamor, and the lamp beckoned like a hand. He had gone to her for diversion—that he now acknowledged—and he had grown each day more deeply concerned with her life and its burdens.

And now here she was at his door, more dangerously enthralling than ever, involved in a snare of most intricate pattern, calling upon him through some hidden affinity of their natures as no woman had ever called him before—calling so powerfully, so insistently, that

to save her from her peril, as pressing as it was intangible, seemed the one and only task at his hand.

In this mood, sustained by the memory of her anguished face, he sent a telegram to Lambert, urging him to come at once to the relief of his wife and daughter.

He did not appreciate the full force of this act until he left the office and resumed his walk homeward. Then, like a shock from a battery, came the realization. "I have now definitely intervened; but how weakly, how ingloriously!"

This thought grew less agreeable and more humiliating as he dwelt upon the possible consequences. "Will Lambert remember me? Will he take my warning to heart?"

In imagination he followed the small envelope as it passed to the hand of a messenger and started up that fearsome, splendid trail towards the mill. The world was stern and cold and white and still up there in the Basin—winter yet reigned in majesty and the pathways were deep sunk in heaped and sculptured snows.

Up to the half-buried office the courier would ride, and with a cheery halloo call Lambert to the door. What would he think upon receiving such an imperative summons from a stranger? "Did I make the situation clear? He may imagine that some dire physical disaster has overtaken his women. But that would be true. Their peril is none the less real because intangible, and yet my part in it may not seem either wise or manly."

In truth every step towards his own door removed him an emotional league from the scene in the hall, and as the throb of Viola's agonized voice died out of his ears the crisis in her life grew hysteric, unsubstantial, and at last unreal. Her gestures, her plea for help, her descent of the stairway, came to seem like the climaxes in a singular drama powerfully acted. "God! what an actress—if she *is* an actress!" he exclaimed, as the tragic intensity of her face returned upon him.

He passed from this to the next phase of his development. In a certain good-humored way he had accepted his friend Tolman's theories of hypnotic control, but had never taken them into serious account till this moment. He was forced now to admit the entire truth of "suggestion" or to charge this girl, whose character so bewitched him, with being an impostor. She was either a marvellous artist in deception or Clarke controlled her through some sinister and little-understood law of the mind. What else could have brought her creeping like a somnambulist down the stairway to demonstrate her tormentor's demoniacal sovereignty? And if he could call her to him in such wise, then all the weird tales of the romancers, all the half-mythical doings of Mesmer and Charcot, were true, and the feet of Bulwer Lytton's remorseless lover solidly set upon the rock of fact.

"My school of thought is very exact and very dogmatic. It prides itself on not looking beyond its nose. There is no room in our text-books for this girl and her

claims. But—" He stood on the corner and surveyed the familiar scene, the rushing, commonplace men, the commonplace horses, the commonplace, ugly walls and signs, and for an instant they lost substance, became as shadowy as drifting mist, the men were of no more bulk than phantoms, the walls and pavements but the effluvia of the commonplace perceiving mind. All were as transitory as smoke, as illusionary as the opium-eater's mid-day dream. What did it signify—this mad rush to get round a corner to creep into a hole? Why should he trouble himself about one of the millions of women, evanescent as butterflies, with which the earth continually replenished its swarms of men?

He walked on, eager to return to his own little nest, to his books, his easy-chair, his glowing fire. What folly to go out of his own life, to profess accountability for the welfare of a girl whom he had seen but a few hours in all his life. Why trouble to explain her case? Was it worth while to dethrone Spencer in order to defend the action of a child's disordered mind.

This mood gave way to one far less philosophical—he permitted himself a moment of exultation over his youth. Science had not yet taken out of him the nerves that leap to the touch of a woman's palm—the right woman. Ten years' deep, patient, absorbing dissection of pathologic tissue had not rendered the gloss and glow of a girl's cheek less velvet-soft. On the contrary, the healthy, wholesome flesh, the matured beauty of this mountain maid seemed of more

worth than any fame to be wrung from the niggard hands of the Royal Society. The absorption of the true scientist was completely broken up. "Love is worth while," he said, in answer to himself, "and to serve others the only solace in the end."

XI

DR. BRITT PAYS HIS DINNER-CALL

KATE had not returned, and he was glad of this, for it gave him time in which to recover his normal serenity of mind. He met her at dinner with an attempt at humor, but she was not to be deceived nor put off from the main subject. He was forced to make instant report, which he did, leaving out, however, all the deeply emotional passages. He fell silent in the midst of this story—profoundly stirred by the memory of Viola's confiding gesture as she leaned to him, awed by the essential purity of the soul he perceived lying deep in her eyes. How blue, how profound they seemed at the moment!

Kate, if she perceived his abstraction, ignored it. "Well, I hope you agree with me now. Clarke is her control, her black beast."

"Yes; that is the only explanation at this moment, the only solution which leaves her innocent."

"But to admit that is to admit a good deal, Mr. Scientist."

"I know that, Mrs. Precipitancy; but what would you have me do? I don't want to believe the girl a trickster." After a pause he said: "Kate, I never felt less

of a man than I acknowledged myself to be as I turned away, leaving her in the clutches of those accursed fanatics."

"Why did you do it?"

"What else could I do? She was entranced—I had no authority. My attempt at a rescue would have created a disgusting scene and put Clarke on his guard. My native caution and my conventional training combined to paralyze me."

Kate, fired with reckless ardor, said, "Let's go and snatch her away—now!"

"No, my second thought is best. Think of what Clarke's arrest would mean to the girl and to us? No, we must wait for Lambert. Clarke at present has all the authority. It won't do to push him. He would instantly trumpet her name to the four winds of heaven if he thought we were about to interfere. If Lambert heeds my warning, he will arrive on Friday, and that will prevent the challenge."

"What sort of person is this Mr. Lambert?"

Serviss pondered. "He's a small, mild-mannered man—not unlike a nice, thoughtful country doctor in appearance."

"I wish he were six feet high, and fierce as his inches," said Kate.

"If he had been that, this preacher fellow would never have been able to run away with his family." He sighed. "Well, he's all we have to conjure with. If he fails us we must resort to craft."

"I wish we could get Viola and her mother here.

Would they come to dinner if I should ask them? If we could get them here once we might be able to persuade them to stay."

"That would not save her from the pillory in which Pratt and Clarke design to set her. We must be careful not to anger them. The girl hates and fears Pratt."

"I know she does."

"His air of proprietorship is fairly indecent. We must be especially careful not to rouse him. He has millions to use in asserting his claims, and is as vindictive as a wolf."

Kate sat in silence for a few moments—a very unusual state with her—and at last announced her purpose. "Leave the whole thing to me. We will have Dr. Weissmann, and I will ask Clarke to come to meet you in order to talk over his plans for a committee. I'll just ignore Pratt. He's nothing but an old kill-joy, anyway."

"He's worse than that. Don't brush him the wrong way. We're going to have trouble with him before we are out of this."

"I don't care. I will not have him in my house," responded Kate.

"Very well. He's eliminated. I hope Clarke will permit them to come."

"Oh, they'll come unless Pratt absolutely locks them in their rooms. Shall I ask Marion and Paul?"

"No. I want a chance to talk to our 'psychic' alone."

"Very well. The table just balances, anyway.

Now, about your telegram, are you going to speak to Mrs. Lambert about that?"

"No. It is all up to Lambert. He can act or not, as he sees fit. He will probably wire them that he is coming, and as there can be no explanations till he arrives you will please say nothing of my share in the warning."

They had just risen from the table when Britt sent in his card.

"Excuse my calling so early," he began, with tranquil drawl, "but I'm going back to the West to-night. I've got to get out of this climate or join the spooks. I'm thinking of doing that, anyway, just to see what it's like 'round the corner in the 'fourth dimension,' and also because I'd like a change of climate."

"You look well—exceedingly well," Kate cheerily replied.

"You're very good; but I don't feel as well as I look. My poor one lung is working overtime, and a collapse is imminent. I don't see how my beloved brother Clarke bears up. He must get help from the 'other side.' You see, *he* spent the winter in Boston—think o' that! But it's telling on him. If I wished him well—which I don't—I'd advise him to return to Colorado and to his Presbyterianism by the limited mail."

"Could he do that—I mean go back to his church?"

"I don't suppose he could. You see, he went out under a cloud—took the whole window-sash with him, you might say—and I don't think the elders would welcome his relapse. Furthermore, he has embraced

'spiritism,' as he calls it, with both arms. By-the-way, professor, I've been talking about these psychic matters with Weissmann and others, and I agree with him that you're the very man to go into an investigation of these occult forces."

"And be called insane, as Zöllner was?"

"Oh, well, times have softened since then. Now, really, what do *you* think of Zöllner's experiments?"

"I wish he hadn't been so eager to demonstrate the fourth dimension—that vitiated everything he did."

"Oh, I don't know. I've been rereading Lodge and Wallace and Myer. We studied them when I was at college, mainly to click our tongues—'poor old chaps!'" He smiled. "You understand? Of course, I can't go the whole length, but I must say I don't know what you're going to do with the evidence Crookes collected."

"But Slade and Home and the Fox sisters, from whom he drew his 'facts,' were exposed again and again, and one of the Fox sisters confessed to fraud, didn't she?"

"M—yes. But afterwards recanted and re-recanted. They were all a dubious lot, I'll admit. That is why I hate to see a girl like Viola Lambert put in their class by a self-seeking fakir like Clarke."

"*Is* he self-seeking—or is he only a fanatic?" asked Kate. "I believe him to be quite sincere—that's why he's so dangerous. He is willing to walk hot ploughshares to advance his faith. What *are* his relations to

Viola? Do you suppose she has actually promised to marry him?"

Serviss waited for his reply in such suspense that his hands clutched his chair. Britt's face lost its gleam. "I'm afraid she has—or at least she feels herself 'sealed to him' by her 'controls.'" Serviss rose and took a turn about the room as Britt went on. "You see, this sweet-tempered old ghost McLeod is anxious to have his granddaughter unite her powers with Clarke's in order to 'advance the Grand Cause.' McLeod, it seems, was a Presbyterian clergyman himself here 'on the earth plane,' and has carried his granitic formation right along with him. I've argued with the old man by the hour, but his egotism is invincible."

Serviss faced him abruptly. "Now, see here, Britt. You've seen a good deal of Miss Lambert's performances—what's your honest opinion of them?"

"Frankly, I don't know," he answered, with a smile. "Since rereading Zöllner and Crookes and going over my notes and those of Dr. Randall, I'm a little shaken, I confess. So far as human evidence goes these men prove that there is a world of phenomena ignored by science. I don't go so far as to say that these doings were the work of disembodied spirits, but I do admit that I am puzzled by things which I have witnessed with one sense or another. The things seem to tally in a most convincing way. This girl is repeating, substantially, the same phenomena witnessed by Crookes twenty-five years ago. The singular thing about the whole subject is that one man

can't convince another by any amount of evidence. A personal revelation is necessary for each individual."

"Isn't that true of other faiths?" asked Kate.

"No, there's a difference. For example, I would take your brother's evidence as to a new germ; but as to a spirit—no. And yet one is quite as incredible as another. Crookes applied the same methods to the study of these manifestations that he used in his other researches, and piled up a mass of evidence, yet his fellows of the Royal Academy sneered or haw-hawed—and do yet. Do you know, doctor," he continued, "I have moments when I dimly suspicion that we scientists are a thought too arrogant. We lose the expectant mind. We assume that we've corralled and branded all facts, when, as a matter of history, there are scattered bunches of cattle all through the hills. Take Haeckel, for instance. He talks very like the head of a church laying down the law to you and to me as well as to the ignorant outsider. Spencer was a good deal less sure of himself. It takes a physical specialist to be cock-sure. Darwin never professed to solve the final mystery of life or death, but Haeckel and Metchnikoff do. They are so militant against religion that they become intolerant of their colleagues who presume to differ with them on matters that are purely speculative. Any one attempting to discuss new phases of human thought is a fakir. I am not willing to say that all the notions of the 'dualists' are survivals of the age of superstition, as Haeckel does. It may be that in the midst of all their fancies which

are survivals there are some subtle perceptions of the future."

Serviss lifted his eyebrows in surprise. "That's a whole lot for you to concede. Weissmann must have been corrupting you."

Britt went on: "We must always remember that every age is an age of transition. We are losing faith in the revelations of the past, but we should not presume to define the faith of the future. Men will not live in the hopelessness which the monists would thrust upon them, they will not patiently wait while Pasteur and Koch and the other germ theorists labor to prolong the life of some other generation. They will always insist on having something to live for and to die for. I don't pretend to say what this faith will be, but it will be sufficing."

Kate exclaimed with glowing eyes: "And all this change in you two men has come about through the influence of a pretty girl!"

The two inexorables looked at each other with a certain air of timidity, and Britt's face expanded in a slow, sly smile. "You've discovered us. We are human, like the rest of our sex, if you catch us out of our laboratories. Theoretically we hold life of no account actually we're all lovers or husbands." A mockery more moving than tears came into his voice. "My hopeless philosophy, dear lady, arises from weak nerves and a poor digestion. I would give all I know of science, all I expect to be in my profession, and all I hope to be after I am dead, for just five years of health,

such as Lambert's miners squander in carousals every Saturday night in the saloons of Colorow. I hold with Haeckel in one thing—I believe in a man's right to suicide, and when I find myself of no further use to the sick I shall slip quietly out. I hope I won't have to poison Clarke before I go. I'd do it cheerfully if I thought it the only way to rid that girl of him." Seeing that his hostess was really shocked by these words, he lightly ended: "However, I think such extreme measures unnecessary. I'm going to send Lambert on to kill him for me."

Kate looked at Morton with inquiring eye—he shook his head.

Britt resumed: "I am trusting in you, Serviss. If I could be sure of living two weeks longer I would stay and help, but money and breath are now vital to me, and I must go. However, I'm perfectly willing to put Clarke out of the way if you advise it. He really ought to die, Mrs. Rice," he gravely explained as he rose to go. "He is a male vampire. To think of him despoiling that glorious young soul maddens me. I am the son of a coarse, powerful, sensual, drunken father; but he neglected to endow me with his brutal health. My mother was an invalid; therefore, here am I, old and worn out at forty—that's why I worship youth and beauty. Health is the only heaven I know, and that is denied me." Here his smile died, his eyes softened, and his face set in impenetrable gravity. "Had I the power I would keep Viola Lambert forever young and forever virgin." Then, with a quick return to his fa-

miliar drawl: "But I am going away without even killing Clarke, to plod my little round in Colorow and wait news from you. If I do not see you again, Mrs. Rice, keep me in mind. I make the same promise your husband made—I will 'manifest' to you if I can."

"I would rather you came in the flesh," she replied.

He bowed deeply. "I thank you both for a very satisfying glimpse of a civilized home."

"Sometimes I think we're over-civilized," she replied, quickly. "But come and see us again."

"I fear it will be as a spook—they laugh at microbes as well as locks. However, I promise to rap when I call."

"Thank you, that will make you a most considerate ghost."

When they were alone together Kate said, with a sigh: "What an amount of sin and sickness and trouble and death there is in the world!"

"That's a sign we're getting on," he replied. "When we're young we laugh at the falling leaves—they are only a sign of some new sport. When I'm as old as you are I suppose I'll begin to observe all the baldheads at the theatre."

"Well, now, for our dinner-party. I must write to Mrs. Lambert to-night."

"You'd better take second thought about this matter—'Reckless Kate.'"

"I have."

"Take a third. Consider this—the girl may go into a trance at the table."

"Oh, if she only would! My fear is she'll be like other amateur performers—'subject to a cold' or something. These gifted people are so often disappointing."

"Now, see here, Kit, seriously, if you invite Miss Lambert to our house it must be as any other charming guest—"

"You didn't suppose I was *really* going to ask her to spookle?" she indignantly answered; then added, with a smile: "Of course, if she *insists* on reading my palm—or—any little thing like that, it wouldn't be nice to refuse, would it?"

"I knew it! You have designs upon her. Don't do it. It would be too gross after your protest against others for using her. She herself complained bitterly of just this treatment. You must not even speak of her powers."

She lifted her hand solemnly. "*I swear!*"

"I mistrust you even when you swear," he ended, doubtfully. "There's a tell-tale gleam in your eyes."

And at this moment of banter they both lost their sense of the girl's imminent peril and thought of her only as a most entertaining possibility as a guest.

XII

VIOLA IN DINNER-DRESS

VIOLA glowed with joy over Kate's invitation to dinner, and, flying to the telephone (as she was requested to do), accepted without consulting either her mother or Clarke, and fell immediately into wonder whether she possessed a gown becoming enough to fit the golden opportunity.

Mrs. Lambert was also pleased, but at once said, "I hope Tony will feel like going."

Viola resented the implied doubt of their own acceptance. "I am going, anyhow. I will not be shut up here any longer like a convict. I like Mrs. Rice very much, and I want to see her house. I know it will be just as nice as she is."

"But we can't go without Anthony, my dear."

Clarke came to the door a little later to say that he had received Mrs. Rice's invitation, but that he did not care to feed the curiosity of such people. "You would better plead a previous engagement," he added to Viola.

"I'll do nothing of the sort," she indignantly answered. "Indeed, I've already accepted. You needn't look black—I'm going," she added, in pouting defiance.

Something in her look as well as in her tone convinced him that wisdom lay in not attempting to restrain her, therefore he gave assent, gloomily and with a sense of loss. "I don't know how Pratt will feel about it. He don't like those people, and, besides, he has invited some friends in to see you this evening."

"He said nothing to me about it," Viola responded, curtly, "and, besides, how can he expect me to be always at his command? He is not my jailer. I'm tired of his demands, they are so unreasonable."

Mrs. Lambert, as usual, entered to soothe and heal. "Viola's been very good about meeting Mr. Pratt's friends, Tony. We've hardly been out to dinner since we came here, and it really seems to me as if we had the right to go out to-night."

"We ought to have Thursdays, anyway," the girl scornfully added. "We have less liberty than our maids. The whole situation is becoming intolerable."

Clarke acknowledged that Pratt demanded a good deal, and was gracious enough to say: "It won't be necessary much longer. I'll go down and try to arrange the matter, and report what he says."

"I don't care what he says, I'm going," Viola repeated. "I'm going if he locks us out. I wish he would."

Pratt was resentful at once. "I don't want her to go to-night. I have some people coming in to see her. I don't want them disappointed; she must remain."

"She feels aggrieved because she has been kept so close here, and I must say—"

"I don't see why she feels that way, she has every luxury. She goes for a drive every afternoon, and there is hardly a night that I don't bring home somebody to dinner. It seems to me she's seeing all the people she ought to see. I don't believe in having her mix with those sceptics too freely."

He went up-stairs sulkily, quite in the mood to bully, but Mrs. Lambert turned away his wrath with a smile and several soft words, and Viola did not see him till she was on her way to the carriage. He was lurking in the hall below, waiting for her surly and sour and insulting.

Viola, perceiving his humor, said to herself: "I will not let you spoil my evening by making me angry. I will not listen to you," and she didn't, though she could not help hearing his warning growl.

"I'll expect you home early."

Once safely out of the house she said to Clarke: "This really is too much, Anthony. He is insufferable. If you don't tell him so, and teach him better manners, I will leave the house. But there! I said I wouldn't let him spoil our evening, and I won't—I won't even think of him again."

Serviss expected her to show some signs of the deep emotional stress of his former interview, but in this he was most pleasurably surprised. He marvelled at the height of her rebound from the wan helplessness of her mood upon the stairs. She was, indeed, a totally differ-

ent being — a radiant, blooming creature belonging wholly to the world of youth—and he was scarcely able to relate the two scenes to the same girl, and again he exclaimed, "What an actress—if she is an actress!" She was very simply attired in pale blue with but few ornaments, but she bore herself like a queen demanding homage—and he gave it. He was all the lover and nothing of the scientist as he stood to greet her.

She, on her part, behind her proud mask, was breathing quick with pleasure. To meet Professor Serviss in dinner-dress, in his own home, exalted her above the pupil and transformed him into something more intimate than the master—something more dangerously compelling than friend.

Kate, quite carried away by her enthusiasm, caught the girl again in her arms. "You dear, sweet thing! I wish I had made a big party for you; you're too fine to be wasted on three cranky old scientists."

Serviss met Clarke with less of repulsion than he had anticipated, for, notwithstanding the preacher's haggard cheeks and a certain set glare which came into his eyes occasionally, he was a handsome figure. He was plainly on guard, however, and extremely ill at ease, and his eyes kept furtive watch on Viola's every movement.

Kate at once engaged him in conversation in order that he and Morton might not fall into argument, and with the further purpose of permitting her young people a little time for mutual explanation. She was glad when Weissmann came in, brisk as a boy, his keen

eyes peering alertly through his horn-bowed glasses; he not merely proved a diversion, he completed her party. The great man was as animated as a cricket (this was his society manner), and upon being presented to Viola began paying her the most marked and absorbed attention, hopping briskly from one heavy German compliment to another, quite unaware, apparently, that she was anything more than a very pretty girl.

He took her out to dinner, with elaborate courtesy, and divided his attentions between his partner and his hostess with mathematical precision, beaming now upon Viola, now upon Kate, with such well-calculated intervals that Serviss broke into a broad smile.

"You find yourself well placed, Dr. Weissmann?"

"Well placed and well pleased," he responded, quickly, "with no thanks to you, I suspect."

Kate was much relieved by Weissmann's liking for Viola—it made her party a little less difficult; but she was anxious to have Morton free to talk with Viola, and to that end drew the good doctor into conversation with Clarke, who was not at all pleased with his seat, which was by design at the farthest remove from his psychic. He saw no reason why they might not have been seated side by side.

As Kate remarked to Marion afterwards, it was a hard team to drive, for the table was too small to permit anything like private conversation at either end, and to enter upon general topics was to start Clarke and Weissmann into dialectic clamor. "I trusted in

the food," she answered to Marion's query. "It was a good dinner and kept even the preacher silent—part of the time."

Clarke's face was flushed with wine, and his glance, which rested often on Viola, was not pleasant. He was afraid of her when she shone thus brightly among careless, worldly, sceptical people. She seemed to forget her work, her endowments, and to think only of flattering speeches and caresses. It was all so childish, so foolish in her, so undignified in one who meant so much to the sin-darkened world.

Mrs. Lambert, on the contrary, was humanly glad (for the moment, at least) of her daughter's respite from her grave duties, and sat blandly smiling while the young people talked animatedly on a wide list of subjects.

Morton was delighted to find that Viola had read a good many books, not always the best books, but of such variety that her mind was by no means that of the school-girl. Her experience in life was very slight, but her hunger to know was keen. He was eager to draw her out on her morbid side, but, as he had said to Kate, "We must not permit anything to rob her of one evening of unbroken normal intercourse. If you can manage Clarke, I will do the rest."

Kate tried hard to "manage Clarke," and was succeeding rather adroitly. Whenever he seemed about to enter upon a discourse she interrupted him, met his ponderous phrases with flippancies, plied him with food (for which he had a singular weakness), and in

many other womanly ways discouraged and, in the end, intimidated him. He was at a distinct disadvantage and knew it, and the knowledge irritated him. However, with all his eccentricities he was a man of considerable social experience, and, while he was not at any time joyous of countenance, he did not in open guise offend, though he sank at last into a glowering silence, leaving the talk to Weissmann.

Morton gave much attention to Mrs. Lambert, securing from her, almost before she realized it, a promise to join a theatre-party, and thereupon turned to Viola to say, "I hope you will consent."

"Consent?" she cried, with shining eyes. "I should like it above everything. You see I've never really *lived* in a big city, and it's all so new and splendid to me."

Morton responded lightly. "I wish I could see it with your eyes. I suppose New York is a wonderful city, and I'm sure all this chaos is making towards something unparalleled in beauty, but just now I take the point of view of a native who has been driven out of the good old down-town streets by vulgar trade. The Servisses lived for forty years at the corner of Corlear Square, but four years ago a big apartment hotel rose next door, shutting off our light, and we had to move. Hence our acrimony. The city grows more and more a show-place, wherein the prodigal American may buy the pleasure he thinks commensurate. Most of us who were born here have quite lost our hold on the earth; for instance, here we are,

Kate and I, treed in a ten-story hotel on ground from which we used to gather huckleberries, and therein lies the history of many another New York family."

Viola looked round the spacious and handsome dining-room. "I think this way of living is beautiful. I want mamma to take an apartment over here on the Park. I love the Park, although it makes me homesick for the West sometimes."

"If you do decide to take an apartment, consult Kate. What she doesn't know of New York isn't lady-like for any one to know. Frankly, Mrs. Lambert, I should be very glad to see you get away from Pratt's house. He is, I fear, a selfish, brutal business-man — an egotist who would sacrifice you both instantly if it would add to his comfort of mind or body. But wait. I am forgetting my duties as host—we are to avoid all unpleasant topics," and thereupon he led the conversation back to impersonal discussions of books and music.

All through this exquisite little dinner Viola sat with a strengthening determination to assert her right to leave her gloomy prison-house on the Drive, a house in which there was neither wholesome conversation nor privacy nor order. An ambition to live humanly and harmoniously in an apartment like this grew each moment in definiteness. She appreciated the delicacy of the centre-piece of maidenhair-fern, veiling with its cloud of green a few flame-like jonquils. She took a woman's joy in the immaculate napery and in the charm and variety of the china. Such house-

keeping was an art, and quite impossible without the personal touch of the mistress, and, as she looked across towards Kate's homely, pleasant face, her heart went out to her in gratitude and love. She could be trusted, this frank, laughing, graceful woman. She represented a most modern union of housewife and intellectual companion. No wonder Dr. Serviss remained unmarried.

Clarke's forbidding, unrelenting face, looming darkly at Kate's side, was revealed to her in a new and most unpleasant light. She resented his scowling glances, and pitied his failure to glow in such genial company. She saw him for the first time the prosing bigot, narrow and repulsive. She resented his failure to subordinate his theories. Up to this moment she had supposed herself respecting him; now she began to realize that she had lost even that, and the thought made her shiver with foreboding. How different were the men of science, with their jocular, irrelevant, but always illuminating comment on whatever subject they handled! It was all touch and go with them, and yet they were quite as serious as he.

As the coffee came in Kate rose with a word of caution: "Morton, we'll expect you to join us soon—"

"You may depend upon us," replied Weissmann.

"And you mustn't talk out all the interesting subjects—save some of them for us to hear."

"We shall not be able to talk on any other subject than yourselves," retorted Weissmann, gallantly, "and that would not be good for you to hear."

Kate laughed. "I know what that means. These Western girls are compelling creatures. Well, I will not complain if she only shakes you out of your scientific complacency."

They were hardly out of the room before Weissmann asked, "Is Miss Lambert from the West?"

"From the Rocky Mountains."

"So? I find her quite charming."

Morton dryly answered: "I noticed that. Yes, she's Western born, but of Eastern stock. Mr. Clarke is a New-Yorker, I believe."

"I was born in Maryland, sir, but all my early life was spent in Brooklyn."

Weissmann turned his telescopic eyes upon Clarke and studied him in silence somewhat as a pop-eyed crab might regard a clam. "So, so," he said, softly. "You are the one who is preparing to assault the scientific world—the Clarke mentioned in the papers to-day?"

Clarke folded his arms in defiant mood. "I am."

"And this charming girl is your victim—the one for whom you make such claims, eh?"

Clarke regarded the old man with imperious lift of the head. "She is, without question, the most marvellous psychic in the world."

"'Psychic!'" Weissmann barked this word at him like an angry mastiff. "'Psychic!' What business has she to be a 'psychic'? She is too lovely to be anything but a wife and mother—a happy hausfrau. And you would make her infamous? My friend, I do not understand you."

Clarke's eyes blazed. "If I had the power I would lay her message before every living soul on the globe. Infamy? Sir, I know no higher honor than that of being cup-bearer to despairing souls thirsting for the water of life." Then a direct answer to the old man's prolonged stare: "You need have no fear. I will not go one jot beyond the advice of her 'guides.'"

"Her 'guides'? Who are they?"

"I mean her invisible ministers, compared with whose wisdom our learning is child's prattle for they are one with the sages of history. Their minds drink of the limitless ocean of all past knowledge and catch the gleam of discovery to come. Furthermore"—here his voice grew hard and his glance shifted to Serviss—"no one living has a more vital interest in her welfare than I. Surely I may be trusted to guard and cherish one who is soon to be my wife."

This blow, delivered with the orator's telling arrangement of phrase, fell with tremendous force upon Serviss, towards whom it was vengefully directed. With a heart filled with anger and disgust and pain the young host responded: "I am glad to have this assurance from you, for your action has seemed to me calculated to do Miss Lambert irreparable injury. Of course, I do not doubt your good intentions as regards her—I cannot do that after your final statement—but I think you underestimate your opposing force."

"We expect battle, but nothing can really harm us. What do we care for the puerile dispraise of the press?

We are doing God's work in the world, and as for the scientists, they are as moles in the dark."

Weissmann's voice became reflective. "Do the parents of the girl not object?"

"Quite the contrary. Her mother trained her for this great work."

"That is very strange—this mother *seems* nice and sensible."

Clarke sneered. "You physicists think nothing is natural or sensible but your own grubbing. You nose in the mire studying parasites of decaying flesh, while we are lifting wing into the world of spirit where neither pain nor death is known. You are blinded by your bigotry, or you would see the leading of every new discovery in the modes of motion. Heat, light, the X-ray, the emanation of radium—do they not all point to new subtleties of the physical universe? The power which the spirits use to communicate with us, the world which they inhabit, is only a higher evolution, a more potent condition—"

Weissmann arrested him in full flight and began to question him about Viola's powers, drawing from him rapidly, and with the precision of a great lawyer, all that he would say of her case, while Serviss, smoking quietly, listened in deep amazement, so candid, so sincere did Clarke seem to be in his answers. He was more—he became eloquent, almost convincing; and the young scientist was forced to acknowledge once more that appearances were deceitful. "Can this man be the fakir I have thought him? He is a bigot,

a crazy fool, but he does not fit the rôle of villain; and yet—"

He could not put the alternative into words, so deeply did it involve Viola herself.

The preacher was in full flow—turgid, studiedly ornate, egotistical, and bombastic, but the final effect, even upon Weissmann, was that of one deluded, rather than of one carrying on a deep and far-reaching system of deception. He bodied forth the emotional moralist seeking escape from the ferocity of the creed in which his youth had been nurtured, rather than the self-seeking, coldly calculating fortune-hunter. With lofty courage he concluded:

"Now to you, gentlemen of science, we say: We respect your methods, but not your subjects of study. Nothing gives me greater pleasure than a perusal of your books. The patient way in which you pursue some clew in the labyrinth of biology is admirable. I met a man last week—a man I knew in college—and upon my asking what he was doing he replied, gravely, 'For the last six months I've been making a study of the parasites in the abdomen of the flea!'" Here Clarke's sneering laugh broke out. "Yet that man despised me—called me a fool—because I, forsooth, was intent on the laws which govern the return of the dead." His laugh died, he became very earnest and very sincere. "Now, men of science, all we ask of you is to apply your precision of handling to subjects a little more worth while than the putrid body of an insect."

Serviss laughed, but Weissmann, with true German contrariety, returned the compliment gravely. Being confronted with a true believer, he automatically assumed the opposite position, and with searching scorn assailed the whole spiritist camp with merciless knowledge of every defenceless portal.

For a time Morton enjoyed Clarke's discomfiture, but at last his sense of duty as host awoke and he was about to come to the preacher's relief when Kate appeared in the doorway, and the old warrior lowered his lance and rose politely.

Kate gave him a reproving glance. "You've been arguing—I can tell by your guilty looks."

"Oh no, not at all; a mere statement of opinion—of no interest, I assure you."

Kate's voice was eager. "Mr. Clarke, Viola wants to sit for us—have you any objections?"

"Kate!" called Serviss. "I am ashamed of you—"

"I assure you I didn't ask it—I didn't even hint towards it. 'Cross my heart—hope to die.'"

Morton was at the moment displeased, for he had been looking forward to a long and intimate conversation with Viola in the drawing-room, and would have been glad if Clarke had opposed it firmly—which he did not. Perhaps he saw a chance to turn the tables on his critics; at any rate, he rose, saying, "I will talk with her and decide the matter," and followed Kate out of the room.

"What is it? What did she say?" queried Weissmann, bewilderedly.

Morton explained that Miss Lambert had particularly requested him to sit with her and talk to her "guides," and that she had expressed a particular desire for an immediate test.

Weissmann's eyes glittered with new interest. "Very good. Why not? It is a fine opportunity. Do you not feel so?"

In truth he did not. The intrusion of the abnormal side of Viola's life seemed at the moment not merely inopportune but repulsive. As he entered the drawing-room he found her sitting in a low chair beside a small table on which stood a shaded lamp. Clarke was talking with her, and Serviss could detect even at a distance the depressing change which had come to her. Her girlish ecstasy was quite gone and in its place lay pallid languor and a look of appeal.

Clarke moved away as his host approached, and Viola, glancing up wanly and wistfully, said: "Isn't it stupid? Just when I was so happy. I wanted this evening free, but they would not have it so. No sooner was I seated here than they began to work on me. They say they want to talk with you—my grandfather especially—and I, too, want you to do so—only I didn't intend to ask it to-night. Please be patient with me, won't you?"

"Do not distress yourself about that. I shall be very glad to sit. I was afraid Kate might be requesting it. I particularly warned her against mentioning the subject, but if your 'guides' wish it, and you are willing, be sure Dr. Weissmann and I will be most

pleased. But, tell me, how did the change come? What began to happen?"

"The usual tapping—here on the table—then my hand wanted to write. I ignored it—I fought it. I didn't intend to yield, but they set to work undermining my will, and then I knew that I must consent or be strangled. As soon as I gave up they took their fingers from my throat, but they are here—my grandfather is just back of me—I can feel his heavy hand on my head. I'm sorry, Professor Serviss. I was having such a good time. I hope you won't despise me."

"You are entirely too modest," he answered, cheerily. "We are highly favored. It's like having Paderewski volunteer to play for his dinner."

His lightness of tone hurt her a little. "You don't believe in me in the least, do you? You think I am an impostor?"

"Oh no. I believe in *you*."

"But you've got to believe in these manifestations if you believe in me."

"No, no, that does not follow," he replied, quickly; then, perceiving that this involved him, "All you do may possibly be explained without resort to the spiritualistic hypothesis—" He was embarrassed by her gaze.

"Why are you so contemptuous of spiritualists? It is very hard to bear."

He felt the rebuke. "I am not contemptuous—"

"Yes, you are. Scientific people never speak of

us without a laugh or a sneer, and it hurts. It confuses me, too. If good people like you care nothing about death—if you only laugh—"

"I beg your pardon, Miss Lambert, I never intended to be either harsh or contemptuous. I do not accept—I mean to say I am *unable* to accept—your faith. I confess that my mind refuses to entertain the postulates of what Clarke considers a religion. I must be honest. I am a 'sceptic,' so far as your faith goes, but that does not mean that I do not believe in the sincerity of your mother; and as to your own powers—I do not wish to dogmatize, for the physical universe is a very large and complicate thing, and, young as I am"—here he smiled—"I don't pretend to a knowledge of all it contains."

She accepted his explanation, and, with musing candor, replied: "I don't really blame you. I suppose if these things had happened to some one else I would not have believed in them. I have thought a great deal of what you said to me. I want to get away from that house; I am hating Mr. Pratt more and more, and I will leave to-morrow if grandfather will only consent. If he comes to you to-night, tell him so—maybe my father will come, too. I want you to know my father. I'm sure you will like him. Isn't it strange that I have never been able to hear his voice?"

He ignored her question. "I do not understand the motives of your 'guides'—I cannot conceive of myself sacrificing you to any cause whatsoever."

"Don't awaken my doubts," she cried, despairingly.



"'BUT, TELL ME, HOW DID THE CHANGE COME? WHAT BEGAN TO HAPPEN?'"

"I don't know why it is, but you always rouse in me something that makes war."

"I'm sorry if I seem to corrupt you."

"I don't mean that," she hastened to say: "The life which you and your sister represent is the life I love. I was almost resigned to my fate when your sister called upon me. Now I'm all rebellion again. Being here to-night makes me hate all that I am. I hate my very name. I hate Pratt and his horrible house—I almost hate my mother. Sometimes she is so cruel to me. She don't mean to be, but she is."

His face grew reflective, almost stern. "I wish there were some way of taking you out of the world in which you now suffer. I wish—" He paused, checked by the thought of Clarke's claims upon her.

"There is only one way—my grandfather must consent to my release; he rules us all."

This delusion rose like a stone wall at the end of every avenue, and Morton turned to a personal explanation. "I cannot associate what you seem to me now with what you were when I last saw you. What would you have said had I seized you the other day—snatched you from the stairs and ran—"

Her eyes opened wide. "The stairs?"

"Had you no knowledge of following your mother down the stairway after our interview?"

"I knew I was entranced, but I didn't know—What did I do?" She asked this anxiously.

"Nothing." He hastened again to change the current. "We were in hot argument. You came

down as peace-maker. I went away cravenly, most impotently, leaving you there like a captive."

"I don't remember a word of it. I came to myself in my own room, and only mother was with me." Her rebellious fire blazed up again. "Oh, Dr. Serviss, I was resigned yesterday, but to-night I am in terror again, and they know it. They are eager to show their power, to confound you and convert Dr. Weissmann. I'm sure they will do some wonderful thing for you to-night if you will let them."

"The best thing 'they' could do for me would be to let you sit and talk to me," he replied in the voice of a lover.

She seemed to listen to some interior voice. "They are insisting. They are here—listen!"

As he listened a series of throbbing raps seemed to come from the chair beneath her hand.

"Very well, we will sit." As he said this three heavy, rending, low thuds sounded on the under side of the table.

"That is grandfather," she said. "He wants you to be very rigid, and so do I," she said. "Sometimes it seems as if I did these things myself—I mean certain physical things—and I get all mixed in my mind. I want you to study me." She passed her hand wearily over her face, and Morton looked at her in sorrow, meditating a firm, decisive assault on her hallucination, but checked himself. "If I am to help you, I must know all about you," he said at last, "and a sitting may help."

"You wonder at my fear of my grandfather, but that's because you don't realize his power. Let me tell you what happened to me once, when I tried to run away from him. I became desperate one summer vacation and determined to get away from it all. Without telling mother, I took the train one morning—" She paused abruptly and pressed both hands to her burning cheeks. "Oh, it was horrible! My grandfather threw me into a trance on the train, and the conductor thought I was drunk—" She shuddered with the memory of it, and could not finish. "Since then I have never dared to really oppose him."

He pondered her blush, the quiver of her lips, and the timid look of her eyes, and gravely answered: "I share your horror of an experience like that. But it does not endear your malevolent grandfather to me. He must be a kind of male witch—"

"You mustn't feel that way towards him," she cried out in some alarm. "He is firm because he feels that I should be doing my work—"

"I'd like to talk this matter over with him, but I don't like to have you entranced. Is that necessary?"

"Yes, to get the voices. The writing we can have any time."

"What do you do to induce this coma—this sleep?"

"Just fold my hands and give myself up."

"It seems a desecration of you; but if there is no other way we will grant 'the powers' audience."

At his word her face cleared, her fingers relaxed, and

she smiled. "Thank you. He has taken away his hand."

As she rose and stood before him she seemed again the buoyant, care-free girl, and he could only weakly say, "It seems so ungracious, so inhospitable in us," as they walked side by side across the room to Kate.

Clarke was sitting in silence, without pretence of listening to his hostess, watching Serviss with gloomy, uneasy eyes—a fierce flame of jealousy burning in his brain. He recalled the change in Viola which had followed this man's visit to Colorow, and associated her first persistent revolt with him; and now, seeing her beside him, in his own house, looking up into his face, absorbed, fascinated, utterly forgetful of her duty, oblivious to every one else, was maddening. Her gown angered him. "Why did she wear that dress?" he fiercely asked himself. "She does not do that for me. She is in love with him — that is why. She shall not come here again. These people are destructive to her higher aims."

In this mood he changed his mind, opposed the sitting; but Viola convinced him that it was the will of her 'guides' and that it was a splendid opportunity to interest two renowned sceptics, and in that spirit he again reluctantly consented.

XIII

THE TEST SÉANCE

MORTON'S study was decided upon as the most suitable place in which to experiment, for the reason that it had but one exit, a sliding double door, which led to the library, and its windows all opened upon the street, six stories below. A burglar could not have entered with full license to do so.

Viola assisted Morton and Kate in clearing the big mahogany table, while Weissmann conferred with Clarke. To judge from the girl's gayety and eager interest the preparations were for a game of cards rather than for a test séance in which her love and honor were at stake. Mrs. Lambert was quite serene; Clarke alone seemed anxious and ill at ease.

Weissmann, at Morton's request, assumed general direction, and betrayed an astonishing familiarity with the requirements. Under his direction they grouped themselves about the table as for whist, Viola at the north end, with Clarke directly opposite, and Kate and Mrs. Lambert on either side and quite near him. The two inquisitors then took seats—Morton at the psychic's right, Weissmann at her left.

When the positions were all decided upon, Viola,

with a note of disappointment in her voice, asked, "Aren't you going to tie me?"

"Oh no," replied Morton, "the conditions are yours to-night. You are our guest. Our tests will be made at some other time."

"Please make them to-night," she pleaded. "Please make them as hard as you can."

Weissmann's glasses glistened upon her with joyful acclaim. "Very good, your wishes shall be met. Let us see—we shall tie you. Have you something suitable?" he asked of his assistant.

Morton took from his desk a roll of white tape. "How will this do?"

"Just the thing," Weissmann replied; "but we must have no knots, no tying. Kate, get your needle; we must fasten Miss Lambert in such wise that no one can say, 'Oh, she untied the knots!'"

Under his supervision Kate looped the tape about Viola's wrists and sewed it fast to her close-fitting satin cuffs. She then encircled her ankles with the tape, and Morton drew the long ends under and far back of the chair and nailed them to the floor. Thereupon Weissmann said, "I wish to nail these wristbands to the chair-arm.—Do we sacrifice the cuffs?" he asked of Viola.

"Yes, yes—anything. Nail as hard as you please."

"And the chair?" pursued the old man, glancing at Morton.

"Oh, certainly," replied he. "Science goes before furniture in this house," and a couple of long brass

tacks were driven firmly down through both tape and sleeve.

"You poor child!" exclaimed Kate. "If they hurt you, cry out, and I will free you."

Weissmann then fastened a silk thread to her wrist and gave one end to Morton. "We will keep this taut," he said; "every motion will be felt."

As they worked the enthusiasm of investigation filled their eyes. They lost sight of the fact that all this precaution implied a doubt of the girl, and Viola on her part remained as blithe as if it were all a game of hide-and-seek.

Clarke, too, became exultant. "McLeod, now is your opportunity," he called to the invisible guide. "Bring your band and put the monist bigots to rout."

Morton moved about the girl with growing excitement, a subtle fire mounting to his brain each time his fingers touched her smooth, round wrists. Once she said, "I have never had a real test like this—this is what I wanted you to do. If anything happens now it will be outside of me, won't it?"

"We must be cruel in order to be kind," he answered, enigmatically.

At last Weissmann stood clear of her. "Now we are ready," he said, beaming with satisfaction. "You see I lock this door and here is the key." He held it up in confirmation. "I pocket the key. Now what?"

"Turn down the gas," replied Clarke. "Do not use electricity—the room must be perfectly dark."

"Why *perfectly* dark? I don't like that." Weiss-

mann spoke with manifest irritation. "We should be able to see something."

Clarke shrugged his shoulders. "You can do as you wish. The guides say their manifestations are antagonized by light— and that darkness is necessary for these special phenomena of the cone."

"Oh, we *have* no cone!" exclaimed Mrs. Lambert.

"Cone? What cone?" asked Weissmann.

"We need some sort of megaphone to enlarge the spirit-voices."

"Make one of card-board," suggested Viola. "Any sort of horn will do."

Morton rose and took down a horn from the top of a bookcase. "Here is the megaphone of my phonograph; will it do?"

Clarke examined it. "It's rather heavy, but I think they will use it. Place it on the table. Put a pad and pencil there also," he added. "We may get some writing."

"Anything else?"

"No—now we are quite ready," replied Clarke, in his exhibition voice. "It is well to touch hands for a time—until the psychic sinks into her trance."

"With your permission," said Morton to Viola.

A faint flush came into her face. "Certainly, professor," and a touch of emphasis on his title had the effect of a slight, a very slight rebuff.

Clarke turned the light down to a mere point of yellow fire, and in the sudden gloom all were plunged

into silence. "Now, whatever you do, gentlemen, don't startle the psychic after she goes into sleep."

Morton, with his fingers resting lightly on Viola's soft hand, experienced a keen pang of sympathetic pain. "She is so charming! What profanation to develop the seamy side of her nature! What pitiful tomfoolery! She is in the lion's mouth now—and yet how eagerly she seemed to desire it. Weissmann has made anything but the simplest ventriloquistic performance impossible—she cannot lift a hand. To save her from herself, as well as from Clarke, it is necessary to expose her weakness as well as his trickery."

She was saying, in answer to a question: "No, Dr. Weissmann, I have no control over the manifestations; in fact, the more anxious I am, the longer we have to wait. I cannot promise anything to-night—"

Morton, hearing this, inwardly commented: "These obscure forms of hysteria often possess the cunning, the dissimulation of madness. Poor girl! She is beginning to realize her predicament, and is preparing us for disappointment," and a return of his doubt kept him silent.

Weissmann spoke. "Shall we not sing something—'We Shall Meet Beyond the River,' or some ditty like that?"

Thereat Kate said: "Doctor, you betray astonishing familiarity with the ways of 'spooks.'"

"Oh, I know everything."

"I begin to believe it," she retorted. "I begin to

suspect that you are a secret adherent. Morton, you would better tie Dr. Weissmann, otherwise he may speak from the cone himself."

As if to counteract this banter Clarke began a discourse on the leadings of the most recent discoveries:

"The X-ray is a mode of motion, as light is a mode of motion, but the waves of light move in such a way as to clash with and weaken those of the X-ray; so we argue that the mode of motion, through which disembodied souls manifest themselves, being far subtler than the X-ray, is neutralized—though by no means destroyed—by the motion called light. Furthermore, there seems to be a reluctance on the part of the invisible ones to have the actual processes scrutinized. I once laid a pencil on the table and asked for a visible action of writing, vainly, so long as it was completely exposed, but upon being covered with a silk handkerchief it plainly rose and wrote. It could be distinctly seen moving beneath the cloth. Sir William Crookes had a similar experience, except in his case he saw the pencil move, prop itself against a ruler, and try three times to write—all in the light. I have seen letters form on an exposed surface of a slate, I have had hands appear through a curtain and write in the light, but the power must always be generated in shadow."

Kate shuddered. "Woo! It gives me the shivers to think of such things. Will anything as wonderful happen to-night?"

"I cannot tell—the conditions are severe, but I think we will have something. Viola?" he called, softly.

"Yes," she answered, faintly.

"Would you like us to sing?"

"No—I'd rather you'd all talk. Perhaps they will let me take part in the demonstration to-night. They promised to do so, you remember."

Weissmann recounted some of the experiences Zöllner had enjoyed in Germany shortly after the Fox sisters became so celebrated in America. "Crookes and Wallace and several others went into the whole question at that time—the world rang with the controversy. But the clamor passed, the phenomena passed. It is like an epidemic, it comes and it goes, and in the end is humanity the wiser? No."

"Yes, it is," broke in Clarke. "We are just that much more certain of the indestructible life of the soul—every wave of this spirit-sea leaves a deposit of fact on the beach of time, makes death that much less dreadful. We make gains each decade. Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, Alfred Russel Wallace, Lombroso have all been convinced of the reality of these phenomena. Surely such men must influence the thought of their time. Experimental psychology is on the right road—"

Morton was suffering with the girl, whose hand was beginning to tremble beneath his palm. She no longer replied to his questions, but that she was still awake he knew, for he could hear her sighing deeply, so deeply that the sound troubled him almost as if she were weeping. His impulse was to rise and turn on the light and give over this trial, which could only

end in humiliating her. "Her temerity is a part of her malady," he argued. "It has arisen through years of misconceived petting and nursing on the part of her mother. Up to this moment her performances have always been in the presence of friends and relatives, or for the consolation of those eager to believe, and therefore easily deluded. Every sitter has conspired to practically force her into an elaborate series of deceptions, each deceit being built upon and made necessary by the other. It is pitiful, but she now believes in herself—that is pathetically certain. Otherwise she would not have yielded herself so completely into the hands of an inexorable investigator like Weissmann. She must take the consequences," he ended, with grim closing of the lips. "We must be cruel in order to be kind. This night may be her salvation."

Weissmann was replying to Mrs. Lambert. "I do not care for a return of my dead, madam; what I wish your daughter to do is quite simple. I would like her to move a particle of matter from A to B, without a known push or a pull—that is to say, by a power not known to science—as Zöllner claimed Slade was able to do for him."

"She can do it," cried Clarke. "She can move a chair from A to B without bringing to bear any of the known forces. She can suspend the law of gravity. She can make a closed piano play, and she can read sealed letters in an ebony box tightly closed and locked."

"You claim too much, my friend," replied Weiss-

mann, ironically. "We shall be satisfied with much less. If she will change one one-hundredth part of a grain from one scale to another, under my conditions, I will be satisfied. The most wonderful phenomena taking place in the dark have no value to me."

Mrs. Lambert interposed. "Please don't argue—it prevents the coming of the spirits."

Both men felt rebuked and the group again settled into silence. Suddenly, Kate began to laugh. "Isn't it childish? Really, Morton, if our friends could see us sitting around here in the dark, as we are now, they would roar. Why should it all be so silly, Mr. Clarke?"

"It is *not* silly if we take the right view. We must sit together in order to get into harmony. We further these conditions by sitting in subdued light with fingers touching. Song adds still more to this concert of thought. Nothing is really silly or prosaic—all depends upon the minds of those—"

He was in the midst of an elaborate defence of spirit methods when Viola's hand began to leap as if struggling to be free. She moaned and sighed and writhed so powerfully that her chair creaked. "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" she cried, gaspingly.

"Is she trying to free her hands?" Morton asked himself, with roused suspicion. "Is this a ruse to cover some trick?"

Mrs. Lambert spoke quietly. "She is going! Sing something, Anthony."

Clarke began to hum a monotonous tune, while Morton, bending towards the girl, listened to her

gurgling moans with growing heartache. "She seems in great pain, Mrs. Lambert. Don't you think we'd better release her? I do not care to purchase sensation so clearly at her expense."

"Don't be alarmed, she always seems to suffer that way when some great manifestation is about to take place."

The poor girl's outcries so nearly resembled those of a death struggle that Kate at last rose. "Turn up that light! She is being strangled!"

"Please be silent!" said Clarke, almost angrily. "Take your hands from her, gentlemen! You are too 'strong'—and do not startle her! Be quiet everybody!"

Morton took his hand away in anger and disgust. "All this is a ruse to weaken our grasp upon her," he thought. "Even the mother, so serene, so candid, is aiding the deception."

"Things will happen now," remarked Mrs. Lambert, confidently; "she is giving herself up at last."

The girl drew a long, deep, peaceful sigh, and became silent, so silent that Morton, leaning far over, with suspended breath, his ear almost to her lips, could detect no sound, no slightest movement, and listening thus he had for an instant a singular vision of her. He seemed to see her laughing silently at him from a distant upper corner of the room, and for the moment secured a glimpse into a new and amazing world — the world of darkness and silence wherein matter was fluid, imponderable, an insubstantial world peopled, nevertheless, with rustling, busy souls.

A sharp rapping began on the cone, a measured beat, which ended in a clang, which startled Kate into a shriek. "Who is doing that?" she asked, nervously.

"They are here," Clarke solemnly announced.

"Is that you, Waltie?" asked Mrs. Lambert, sweetly.

Three raps, loud and clear, answered "yes." A drumming on the cone followed, and Mrs. Lambert, her voice full of maternal pride, remarked: "Waltie is the life of our sittings—he's *such* a rogue! You must be a nice boy to-night—on account of these very distinguished men."

"Rap, rap!" went the cone.

"Does that mean 'all right'?"

"Rap, rap, rap!" Yes.

"Is grandfather there?"

"Yes."

"Does he wish to speak to the gentlemen?"

"Yes."

"Are we sitting right?"

A decided thump—"No."

Guided by the rapping Mrs. Lambert and Kate moved down to the foot of the table, sitting close beside Clarke, thus leaving Morton and Weissmann alone with the sleeping girl. No sooner were they rearranged than the table began to move, precisely as though pushed by the girl's feet. Still guided by the rapping, Weissmann and Morton moved with the table, but retained their threads of silk. Morton's pity had given place to a feeling of resentment at this device to get them farther away, and he drew his tell-

tale thread tight across his finger. "If she moves she is betrayed," he thought with hardening heart.

No sooner were they settled than a fumbling sound began in the middle of the table, and the pencil was twice lifted and dropped. Following this the leaves of the writing-pad rustled as though being thumbed by boyish hands.

Kate shivered and cried out: "This is uncanny! Morton, are you doing this?"

"Certainly not," he replied, curtly.

"Do you feel any motion in your thread?" asked Weissmann, in a quiet voice.

"None whatever," Morton replied.

"Then the psychic is not moving."

Again they sat in silence, and after some minutes the fumbling began again and the horn was heard scraping slowly about, as if being lifted with effort only to fall back with a clang.

"Is it too heavy?" asked Clarke.

Three sharp raps replied—an angry "yes"—and then, with a petulant swing, the instrument apparently left the table and floated upon the air. In deep amazement Morton listened for some movement, some sound from Viola, but there was none, not a breath, not a rustle of motion where she sat, and the silk thread was tight and calm. "She has nothing to do with *that*," he said, beneath his breath.

Kate called excitedly. "Oh! It touched me."

"What touched you?" asked Weissmann.

"The horn."

"Did it bump you?"

"No, it seemed to float against me."

Morton spoke out sharply: "Where is Mr. Clarke?"

"Right here on my right," replied Kate.

"What idiotic business!" he exclaimed, mystified, nevertheless.

The horn dropped to the middle of the table, but was immediately swept into the air again as if by a new and more vigorous hand, and a voice heavily mixed with air, but a man's voice unmistakably, spoke directly to Morton, sternly, contemptuously.

"We meet you on your own level. You asked for material tests, and now conditions being as you have made them—proceed. What would you have us do?"

"Who are you?"

"I am Donald McLeod—grandfather to the psychic."

At this moment Morton became seized of the most vivid realization of the physical characteristics of the man back of the voice. In some mysterious way, through some hitherto unknown sense, he was aware of a long, rugged face, with bleak and knobby brow. The lips were thin, the mouth wide, the dark-gray eyes contemptuous. "It is all an inner delusion caused by some resemblance of this voice to that of some one I have known," he said to himself; but a shiver ran over him as he questioned the old man. "If you are the grandfather of the psychic," he said, "I would like to ask you if you think it fair to a young girl to use her against her will for such foolery as this?"

"The purposes are grand, the work she is doing im-

portant — therefore I answer yes. She is yet but a child, and the things she does of her own motion trivial and vain. We make of her an instrument that will enable man to triumph over the grave. You will observe that we do not harm her, we take but little of her time, after all. You are unnecessarily alarmed. Our regard for her welfare far exceeds yours. Her troubles arise from her resistance. If she would yield herself entirely, she would be happy."

As the voice paused, Morton asked, "Weissmann, can you hear what is being said to me?"

"Very indistinctly," answered Weissmann.

"What does it say?" asked Kate. "I can only hear a kind of jumble."

Weissmann interjected: "I must ask you, Mrs. Rice, have you tight hold of Mr. Clarke's hand?"

"Yes," answered Kate.

Morton's brain whirled in confusion and conjecture. He believed the whole thing to be a piece of juggling, and yet he could not connect Viola in any way with it, and it seemed impossible, also, for Mrs. Lambert to sit where she was and handle the cone, to say nothing of the ventriloquistic skill necessary to carry on this conversation. He again addressed the voice: "You consider your control of the psychic to be justified?"

"We do."

"Do you know, also, what perilous notoriety, what positive disgrace—from every human point of view—you are about to bring upon her?"

The hidden old man pondered a moment, as if to

master a profound contempt, then answered: "We have taken all things into account. When she has grown to years of sobriety she will thank us that we turned her aside from dancing and from light conversation, and from all loose-minded companions. All the sane pleasures are now hers. She is soon to be idolized by thousands. Her playing on the piano, her singing are as the rustle of leaves in the forest compared to her mediumship, which is as a trumpet-blast opening the gates of the city of refuge to let the weary traveller in." The voice weakened a little. "The earth-life is but a school—the real life is here. Besides, when she has completely subordinated her will to ours, when she has given our message—" The spirit grandsire seemed to falter and diminish. "My power is waning, but I will again manifest. We will try—" The voice stopped as though a door had been shut upon the speaker, and the megaphone dropped upon the table.

"All that is very interesting," commented Weissmann, "but inconclusive. Is it all over?"

"Oh no," answered Mrs. Lambert. "They are uniting upon something wonderful—I feel it."

As they listened the horn moved feebly, uneasily rising a few inches, only to fall as though some weak hand were struggling with it; but at last it turned towards Weissmann, and from it issued the voice of a little girl, thrillingly sweet and so clear that Serviss could hear every word. She addressed Weissmann in German, calling him father, asking him to tell mother

not to grieve, that they would soon all be together in a bright land.

To this Weissmann replied in harsh accent: "You assert you are my daughter?"

The voice sweetly answered: "Yes, I am Mina—"

"But Mina could not understand a word of English—how is that?"

The little voice hesitated. "It is hard to explain," she replied, still in German. "I can *understand* you in any language—but I can only speak as you taught me."

Thereupon he addressed her in French, to which she replied easily, but in her native tongue.

As this curious dialogue went on Serviss was searching vainly for an explanation. "Mr. Clarke, will you kindly speak at the same time that this voice appears?"

Clarke began a discourse, and the two voices went on at the same time. The young scientist then said: "Mrs. Lambert, will you permit Kate to lay her hand over your lips? You understand, it is for the sake of science—"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Lambert.

Here the test failed of completeness, it was so difficult to get the three voices precisely together; but at last it seemed that the child's voice was produced at the same time that Clarke spoke and while Kate's hand covered the mother's mouth.

Thereupon the little voice said farewell, and all was silent for a few moments. The cone rose again into

the air and a soft, sibilant voice addressed Mrs. Lambert.

"Oh!" she cried, joyfully. "It is Robert!—Yes, dear, I'm listening. I'm so glad you've come. Can't you talk with Professor Serviss?—He says he will try," she said to the company.

As Morton waited the cone gently touched him on the shoulder, and a moment later a man's voice, utterly different from the first one and of most refined accent, half spoke, half whispered: "We are glad to meet you, professor. I am deeply gratified by your interest in our dear girl."

"Who are you?" he asked, moved, in spite of himself, by a liking for this new personality, so distinct from the others.

"I am R. M. Waldron—Viola's father."

He seemed to wait for questions, and Serviss asked: "How do *you* feel about your daughter's mediumship? Are you not uneasy when you think of what you are demanding of her?"

The invisible one sighed, hesitated, and replied with evident sadness: "It troubles me to find her reluctant. I wish she were happier in the work. It seems so important to us." Then the voice brightened. "But perhaps it is only for a little while. After the public test—after the truth of her mediumship is made manifest—I think, I hope, we will ask less of her. Perhaps it will be possible to release her altogether for a time; but for the present she is too valuable—" The sentence was lost in a buzz of inarticulate whisper-

ing, as if two or three friends were consulting. The opening and closing of lips could be heard, and a stir within the horn was curiously trivial in effect, as if a mouse were at play with a dry leaf.

"If I were to organize a committee of men like Weissmann and Tolman, and other men of international fame, willing to test your daughter's powers, will you give over this public demonstration — this publishing of a challenge?"

Clarke interrupted almost angrily. "Not unless you promise to—"

"Be silent!" commanded Weissmann.

From the horn came a faint murmur, so dim, so far, Serviss could, with difficulty, distinguish the words. "We will consider that. I am going. Guard my girl. Good-bye."

The horn again seemed to rest, and for a long time no sound or stir broke the silence, till at last Viola began to writhe in her chair in greater agony than before.

"I think she is waking," said Morton.

Mrs. Lambert answered, quickly: "No. Some great event is preparing—when this paroxysm passes some very beautiful test will come."

While Morton and Weissmann were considering this the girl again became silent as a stone, and a moment later a clear, sweet sound pulsed through the air as if an exquisite crystal bell had been struck. Then, while still this signal trembled in his ear, a whispering noise developed just before the young man's face,

as if tremulous lips were closing and unclosing in anxious effort to communicate a message without the use of the trumpet.

"Is some one trying to speak to me?" he asked, gently.

Three measured strokes upon the tiny bell replied, and with their pulsations the room seemed to stir with a new and different throng of winged memories. The very air took on mystery and beauty and a sweet gravity. Matter was for the moment as subtle, as imponderable as soul.

"Who is it?" he asked, and into his voice, in spite of himself, crept a note of awe.

The answer came instantly, faint as the fall of an autumn leaf on the grass.

"Mother."

Kate bent eagerly forward. "Who was it, Morton?"

Ignoring her question Morton addressed the invisible one. "Can't you speak again?"

There was no reply and the whispering ceased. Almost instantly the horn seemed grasped by a firm and masterful hand, and the rollicking voice of a man broke startlingly from the darkness in words so clear, so resonant, that all could hear them.

"Hello, folks. Is this a Quaker meeting?"

"Who are you?" asked Morton.

"Can't you guess?"

Kate gasped. "Why, it's Uncle Ben Roberts!"

The voice chuckled. "Right the first time. It's old 'Loggy'—true bill. How are you all?"

Kate could hardly speak, so great was her fear and joy. "Morton Serviss, what do you think now? Ask him—"

The voice from the trumpet interposed. "Don't ask me a word about conditions over here—it's no use. I can't tell you a thing."

"Why not?" asked Morton.

"Well, how would you describe a Connecticut winter to a Hottentot? Not that you're a Hottentot"—the voice broke into an oily chuckle—"or that I'm in a cold climate." The chuckle was renewed. "I'm very comfortable, thank you." Here the invisible one grew tender. "My boy, your mother is here and wants to speak to you but can't do so. She asked me to manifest for her. She says to trust this girl and to carry a message of love to Henry. I brought one of her colonial wineglasses with me — as a sign of her presence and as a test of the power we have of passing through matter."

For nearly an hour this voice kept up a perfectly normal conversation with a running fire of quips and cranks—recalling incidents in the lives of both Kate and Morton, arguing basic principles with Weissmann yet never quite replying to the most searching questions, and finally ended by saying: "Your conception of matter is childish. There is no such thing as you understand it, and yet the universe is not as Kant conceived it. As liberated spirits we move in an essence subtler than any matter known to you—ether is a gross thing compared to spirit. Your knowledge is

merely rudimentary—but keep on. Take up this work and my band will meet you half-way. My boy, the question of the persistence of the individual after death is the most vital of all questions. Apply your keen mind to it and depend on old 'Loggy.' Good-by!"

Kate was quivering with excitement. "Morton, that settles it for me. That certainly was 'Loggy.' Oh, I wish mother could have spoken."

Morton's voice was eager and penetrating as he said: "Mrs. Lambert, I would like to place my hand on your daughter's arm again. I must be permitted to demonstrate conclusively that she has had nothing to do with the handling of the horn."

"I will ask the 'guides.' Father, can Professor Serviss—"

Three feeble raps anticipated her question.

"They say 'yes'—but they are very doubtful—so please be very gentle."

Serviss rose, his blood astir. At last he was about to remove his doubt—or prove Viola's guilt. "Doctor," he said, and his voice was incisive, "take the other side and place a hand on her wrist. That will be permitted?" he asked.

Three raps, very slow and soft, assented.

Clarke interposed. "I am impressed, gentlemen, to say: Let each of you put one hand on the psychic's head, the other on her arm."

"We will do so," replied Weissmann, cheerfully.

With a full realization of the value of this supreme test of Viola's honor, Morton laid his right hand lightly

on her wrist. At the first contact she started as though his fingers had been hot iron, and he was unpleasantly aware that her flesh had grown cold and inert. He spoke of this to Weissmann, who replied: "Is that so! The hand which I clasp is hot and dry, which is a singular symptom." Then to the others: "I am now holding both her hands. One is very hot, the other cold and damp and I feel no pulse."

"She is always so," Mrs. Lambert explained. "She seems to die for the time being."

"That is very strange," muttered Weissmann. "May I listen for her heart-beat?" Three raps assented, and a moment later he said, with increased excitement: "I cannot detect her heart-beat."

Clarke reassured him. "Do not be alarmed. She is not dead. Proceed with your experiment." There was a distinct note of contempt in his voice.

As Morton laid his hand upon the soft coils of her hair Viola again moved slightly, as a sleeper stirs beneath a caress, disturbed yet not distressed—to settle instantly into deeper dream.

"We are ready," called Weissmann. "Whatever happens now Miss Lambert is not the cause. Take Mr. Clarke's hands in yours—"

"Mrs. Lambert's also," added Morton.

"Our hands are all touching," answered Kate.

"Now, let us see!" cried Weissmann, and his voice rang triumphantly. "Now, spirits, to your work!"

Clarke laughed contemptuously. "You scientists are very amusing. Your unbelief is heroic."

As they stood thus a powerful revulsion took place in Morton's mind, and with a painful constriction in his throat he bowed to the silent girl, and with an inconsistency which he would not have published to the world, he prayed that something might happen—not to demonstrate the return of the dead but to prove her innocence.

As he waited the pencil began to tap on the table, and with its stir his nerves took fire. A leaf of paper flew by, brushing his face like the wing of a bird. A hand clutched his shoulder; then, as if to make every explanation of no avail, the room filled with fairy unseen folk. Books began to hurtle through the air and to fall upon the table. A banjo on the wall was strummed. The entire library seemed crowded with tricksy pucks, a bustling, irresponsible, elfish crew, each on some inconsequential action bent; until, as if at a signal, the megaphone tumbled to the floor with a clang, and all was still—a silence deathly deep, as if a bevy of sprites, frightened from their play, had whirled upward and away, leaving the scene of their revels empty, desolate, and forlorn.

"That is all," said Clarke.

"How can you tell?" asked Kate, her voice faint and shrill with awe.

"The fall of the horn to the floor is a sure sign of the end. You may turn up the gas, but very slowly."

Stunned by the significance, the far-reaching implications of his experiment, Morton remained standing while Weissmann turned on the light.

Pale, in deep, placid sleep, Viola sat precisely as they had left her, bound, helpless, and exonerated. She recalled to Morton's mind a picture (in his school-books) of a martyr-maiden, who was depicted chained to the altar of some hideous, heathen deity, a monster who devoured the flesh of virgins and demanded with pitiless lust the fairest of the race.

Of her innocence he was at that moment profoundly convinced.

XIV

PUZZLED PHILOSOPHERS

WHILE he still stood looking down upon her Viola began to moan and toss her head from side to side.

"She is waking," cried Mrs. Lambert. "Let me go to her."

"No!" commanded Weissmann, "disturb nothing till we have examined all things."

"Make your studies quickly," said Morton, his heart tender to the girl's sufferings. "We must release her as soon as possible."

Weissmann was not to be hastened. "If we do not now go slowly we lose much of what we are trying to attain. We must take her pulse and temperature, and observe the position of every object."

"Quite right," agreed Clarke. "Do not be troubled —the psychic is being cared for."

Thus reassured the two investigators scrutinized, measured, made notes, while Kate and Mrs. Lambert stood waiting, watching with anxious eyes the changes which came to Viola's face. Weissmann talked on in a disjointed mutter. "You see? She has no pulse. The threads are unbroken. The table is thirty inches

from her finger-tips. Observe this pad, forty-eight inches from her hand—and which contains a message."

"Read it!" demanded Kate.

He complied. "'*You ask for a particle of matter to be moved from A to B without the use of any force known to science. Here in this wineglass is the test. Oh, men of science, how long will you close your eyes to the grander truths.*'"

"That is from father," remarked Mrs. Lambert.

"It is signed 'McLeod,' and under it are two words, 'Loggy' and 'Mother,' each in different handwriting."

"Give it to me!" cried Kate, deeply moved.

"And here is the wineglass," replied Weissmann, extracting from among the books a beautiful piece of antique crystal.

Kate took it reverentially, as if receiving it from the hand of her dead mother. "How came that here?"

"You recognize it? It was not left here by mistake?"

"Oh no. There are only four of them left and I keep them locked away. I have not had them out in months."

Clarke smiled in benign triumph. "That is why they brought it—to show you that matter is an illusion and to prove that dematerialization and transubstantiation are facts. That was the bell we heard."

"Morton, what do *you* think? How could—"

But Morton was bending above Viola and did not heed his sister. The girl's eyes were opening as from natural slumber, and he said, gently: "I hope you are not in pain? We will release you in a moment."



"THE GIRL'S EYES WERE OPENING AS FROM NATURAL SLUMBER"

She smiled faintly as she recognized him. "My arms are numb, and my feet feel as if strips of wood were nailed to my soles," she answered, wearily, "and my head is aching dreadfully; but that will soon pass."

"She always complains of her feet," the mother explained. "She can't walk for quite a little while afterwards."

"You poor thing!" exclaimed Kate. "You are a martyr—that's what you are."

Viola looked up with sweet and anxious glance. "Did anything happen? Did your friends come to you, Mrs. Rice?"

"No, but several voices spoke to Morton."

"I'm sorry no one came to you. I've been a long way off this time," she continued, with dreamy, inward glance, "into a beautiful country from which I hated to return. I wouldn't have come back to you at all only a thread of light tied my soul to my body and drew me down to earth in spite of myself."

"What was it like—that far country?" asked Morton.

She pondered sleepily. "I can't tell you—only it was very beautiful and I was happy. Every one lived in the light with nothing to fear. I had no memory of the earth—only of my body which I was sorry for. There was no death, no cold, no darkness up there. I was very happy and free."

"You should be free and happy here," answered Morton, gravely. "Come, doctor, can't we free her now?"

"Yes, you may do so," he replied, still busy with his note-book.

The young host, with a feeling of having been unnecessarily brutal, ripped the tape loose from the floor, and Kate slipped the loops from Viola's ankles. Then, leaning on her hostess's arm, she rose slowly, smiling brightly, her weakness most appealing. "I hope a great deal happened—it means so much to me. I want to talk, but I can't now, my head is too thick. You must tell me all about it pretty soon."

"A great deal happened—you are quite clear of any connection with it."

Her face lit with placid joy. "Oh, I'm so glad! It must be very late," she added, turning to her mother.

"Yes, and we must be going," responded Mrs. Lambert, nervously. "Mr. Pratt will be impatient."

"I wish you'd stay with me to-night," pleaded Kate. "It was all so wonderful. I can't let you go. Please stay! Both of you. You're too tired to go out into the raw air."

"Oh no, we can't do that—not to-night," Viola answered, decisively.

Morton threw back the doors. "Kate, take Miss Lambert into the dining-room and give her something to drink. She is quite exhausted. Let me steady you," he said, tenderly, touching her arm. "You fairly reel with weakness."

"I will be as well as ever as soon as my blood begins to circulate," she bravely answered, and his touch quickened her pulse miraculously.

As soon as Weissmann had finished taking his notes and measurements, he locked the door of the library and joined them all in the dining-room, where they were sipping coffee and nibbling cake. Morton was sitting beside Viola (who had entirely regained her girlish lightness of mood), and was chafing her cold hand in the effort to restore the circulation as well as to remove the deep mark the silken thread had made about her wrist.

"We shall be obliged to shut out all young men from our committee," the old scientist jocularly remarked, as he stood looking down at them. "Lovely psychics like you would put the whole American Academy of Science in disorder."

Clarke, raging with jealous fire, turned to Weissmann in truculent mood. "Well, Dr. Weissmann, how do you account for these phenomena? To whose agency do you ascribe these marvels?"

"Spooks!" answered the old man, with cheerful promptness.

Clarke reeled before this laconic admission. "What! You agree? You admit the agency of spirits?"

"Certainly—unless I say Miss Lambert wriggled herself out of her skin, which would not be nice of me, or that you are the greatest ventriloquist in the world. No, I prefer to compliment the spirits."

Clarke's face darkened. The old man's face and voice were too jocose. "I see you do not value our wonderful experiences to-night."

Viola, pinching her sleeve about her wrist, looked

up roguishly. "I couldn't possibly wriggle out of my gown, could I, Dr. Weissmann? And if I did, how could I get the tacks back without a hammer?"

"Precisely. You would be more burglarious than the ghosts which walk through the key-holes," he answered.

"And the little girl who spoke German—who was she?" asked Kate.

The hour that followed was a delicious one for the young people, for they had come at last to some sweet and subtle understanding. As she recovered the use of her limbs Viola glowed with joy of Morton's change of attitude towards her. He, on his part, was puzzled by this mood. It was as if she had been vindicated to herself—liberated from some dead body of doubt.

Clarke glowered in silence; disapproving, with manifest disdain, the levity of the scientists, and resenting bitterly Viola's growing trust and confidence in Serviss. Each moment his anger took on heat, and he found it hard to reply even to his hostess, who tried to interest him in a deeper discussion of the evening's marvels. He seemed to have but one desire—to get away and to take Viola with him.

"Tell me," said Viola to Morton, "did papa speak to you?"

"A voice purporting to be your father spoke a few words."

"He is very nice. Didn't you think so?"

"The voice was very gentle and refined, and expressed a very tender regard for you."

She sighed. "I have never heard my father's voice, for he always comes when I am in my deepest trances. They say that I will be permitted some day to hear all the voices through the cone—I only hear them now in an interior way."

"Do you really suffer as you seem to do?" he asked, the echo of his pity still in his tone.

"Not after I am really gone. Did I groan?"

"Horribly! My heart was filled with remorse—"

"I'm sorry. It doesn't really hurt me—physically. You see I am perfectly well again. And yet I hate more and more to give myself up. I can't explain it, but I seem to be losing more and more of *myself*—that is the thought that scares me. I hate to think of being so helpless. It seems to me as if I were becoming like—like a hotel piano—for any one to strum on—I mean that any one in the other world— It is so crowded over there, you know!" Her brows drew together in momentary disgust.

"I *don't* know, but it must be so if all the myriads of past humanity are living there. If I had my way you would never sit again," he declared, most fervently.

"I wouldn't mind so much," she went on, "if I were not marked out for suspicion—if people would only talk to me of nice earthly things part of the time as they would to any other girl—but they never do. Everybody wants to talk to me about death and spirits—"

"That's what gives edge to my remorse," he interrupted. "Here am I doing the very things you

abhor. To think that we who have made such a protest against your slavery could not allow you one free evening! I will not say another word on these uncanny subjects."

"But I *want* to talk of them to *you!* I wanted to tell you all about myself that day we rode up to the mine—but I could not."

"I wish you had. It might have made a great deal of difference in your life—and mine. I have been thinking of that ride to-night, as we sat in the darkness. If I could, I would keep you as girlish, as gay, as you were that day. This business is all a desecration to me. I love to think of you as you were then —when you laughed back at me in the rain. I wish we were both there this minute."

She smiled. "You forget the time of night!" Her face grew wistful. "I've been getting homesick for the mountains lately—and yet I like it here. I love this beautiful room. I adore your sister. I know I could have a delightful time if only my guides weren't so anxious to have me convert the world."

"I grow more and more conscience-smitten!" he exclaimed. "To think we should be the ones to tie and torture you, and at our first dinner-party!"

"Please don't blame yourself. It was not your fault; grandfather insisted on talking with you, and I—I wished it very much." Her face grew radiant with pleasure. "Oh, I'm so glad you made it a test-sitting! —I want you to believe in me. I mean that I don't deceive—"

"I am sure of that."

"There are so many things I want to talk with you about—but not now—it is late."

Clarke, who had grown too restless to remain seated, interrupted a story which Kate was relating, and rose, saying, harshly: "It is time for us to be going. Pratt will lock us out if we don't."

The cloud again fell on Viola's face—her little hour of freedom from her keeper was over. Morton felt the change in her, and so did Kate, who fairly pleaded with the mother to remain. "It is late and you are tired, and after this wonderful evening you ought not to go back to that gloomy place."

Mrs. Lambert looked at Clarke, whose reply was stern. "No, we must return."

Something very sweet and intimate was in Morton's voice as he found opportunity to say to Viola: "I don't like to think of you returning to that gilded mausoleum. It is a most unwholesome place for you. You are too closely surrounded with morbid influences."

"I know it. I dread to go back—I admit that. I suppose Mr. Pratt is a good man, I know he does a great deal for the faith, and he is very generous to us, but oh, he is so vulgar, so impertinent! He bores me nearly frantic by being always at my elbow. I shudder when he touches me as if he were some sort of evil animal. Mother can't realize how he annoys and depresses me, and Anthony insists that we must endure it."

"I wish you'd stay here!" he exclaimed, impulsively.

"Accept my sister's invitation—it would give us such an opportunity to talk of this sitting. Come, let me send for your trunks."

She shrank a little from his eager eyes, and Mrs. Lambert again interposed. "It is quite impossible, professor; perhaps some other time."

Viola yielded to her mother and went away to get her cloak, and Morton turned to Clarke. "One of the conditions of my promise to organize a committee is this: you and Pratt must be excluded from the circle."

Weissmann echoed this. "Quite right! That we demand."

The clergyman's face hardened. "You ask the impossible. It is necessary for me to be present at each sitting. I have the right to be there as the historian of the case. Furthermore, I add to the strength of the manifestations—that I have fully demonstrated."

"I appreciate your position, but in order to avoid criticism, to make the tests perfect, it will be necessary to hold the sittings either here or at Weissmann's, and to exclude every one connected with Miss Lambert. In no other way can we convince ourselves or the public."

Clarke's face was darkly stubborn. "Then you will have no sittings. My challenge will go forth next Sunday afternoon, and one of the unchangeable clauses of that challenge will be this: the sittings must take place in Pratt's library and I must be present."

"I hope you will not insist on that," Morton further urged; "for Miss Lambert's sake you must not. To

incorporate such terms in your challenge will brand her as an impostor and you and Pratt as her confederates. In this statement I think you will find her 'controls' agreeing. They were undecided to-night, but when they consider carefully they will see that my advice is sound."

Clarke's eyes were aflame. "You have my terms. Accept them or refuse them, as you please."

Viola, returning, extended her hand to Morton with a trustful smile. "I've had a beautiful evening."

"To say that after we have tied you hand and foot till you were numb, and kept you in the dark all the evening, is very gracious of you. I feel very much the brutal host. But you must come again. I swear Kate shall not pester you next time."

Kate was indignant. "Well, I like that! when *you* were the one crazy to experiment. Of course they're coming, coming to stay to-morrow night, and any one who dares to talk ghosts to her will be sent to bed."

And so in a hearty, cordial clangor of farewells they got out into the hall, and Morton, seeing Viola in her handsome cloak, her eyes shining, her face once more gay and smiling, was again filled with wonder at her astounding resiliency of mood. It was as if two sharply differentiated souls alternated in the possession of her body.

Clarke, wearing a cape overcoat and a soft hat, was far less admirable in appearance than when, with head uncovered, he sat within. He resembled a comic picture of an old-fashioned tragedian—a man glad to

feel the finger of remark directed towards him, but his face was bitter, his eyes burning with anger, his lips white with pain.

Serviss relented as he studied him. "You'd better take Britt's trail and return to the mountains," he said, kindly. "This is a bad climate for you."

"My work is here," he replied, curtly. "I have no fear," and so they parted.

Weissmann was sitting in silent meditation in one corner of the dining-room when Serviss returned. "Well, master, what do you think of to-night's performance?"

Weissmann replied, in ironical phrase: "Hearing in civilized man is vague and indefinite. Spooks do well to limit their manifestations to a sense which most powerfully appeals to the imagination."

Morton spoke with great earnestness. "Weissmann, that girl could not move a limb. She positively remained where we put her. So far as I am concerned, to-night's test eliminated her from the slightest complicity, and I confess it rejoices me greatly; but who was responsible for the prestidigitation?"

Weissmann replied, slowly: "It is very puzzling," and fell into a muse which lasted for several minutes. At last he roused to say: "Well, we will see. Next time Clarke and the mother must be eliminated."

"You don't think evil of her?" exclaimed Morton. "She is very anxious, you know—"

Kate put in her word. "It's all very simple," she said; "the spirits did it. You needn't tell me that

Clarke or Mrs. Lambert got up and skittered around the room doing those things. I held their hands—and know they didn't get away. Besides, how did that glass come there? and how could they make those voices sound so natural? What is the use of being stupidly stubborn? If you treat Viola fairly she will confound your science."

"You base all this on one imperfect test?"

"I don't know what you'd call a *perfect* one. Anyhow, that child is absolutely honest."

"I hope you are right, Kate; but there are some serious discrepancies—even in to-night's performances. Nothing took place which I could not do sitting in her chair with my hands free."

"But her hands weren't free! If there is any virtue in cotton fibre or steel she remained precisely where we set her at the beginning."

"But to admit that one book was moved from its place is to admit that a force exists unknown to science."

"But what are you going to do? Did you do it? Or did I? Did Clarke reach from where he sat and manipulate the horn? Who brought the old wine-glass from the china-closet? No one entered from the outside—that is certain. And then the things 'Loggy' said?"

"What do you think, Dr. Weissmann?"

Weissmann looked up abstractedly. "If Clarke performed these feats to-night he is wasting his time in any profession but jugglery. You said the cone touched you?" he asked of Morton.

"Several times."

"To do that he must have left his seat."

"I am perfectly sure he did not," replied Kate, firmly.

Morton insisted. "He must have done so, Kate—there is no other explanation of what took place. It was very dark and the rug soft. There is another important point—all of the books came from within a radius of a few feet of the psychic, so that if she *were* able to rise and free her hands—"

"Which she did not do," answered Weissmann. "She remained precisely where we put her; but we should have nailed Clarke to the floor also."

"How about the child who spoke German?" asked Kate. "Was she—"

Weissmann replied slowly, with a little effort, "I had a little girl of the name Mina who died at eight years of age."

Kate's voice expressed sympathy. "I didn't know that. She must have been a dear. The voice was very sweet. I could almost touch the little thing."

"I do not see how Clarke or any one here knew of my daughter or her name. Clarke may be a mind-reader. The voice did not prove itself."

"Neither was 'Loggy' quite convincing," said Morton. "And yet I cannot understand how those voices were produced. Our imaginations must have been made enormously active by the dark. As scientists we cannot admit the slightest of those movements without the fall of some of our most deeply grounded dogmas.

What becomes of Haeckel's dictum—that matter and spirit are inseparable?"

"There is matter and matter," replied Weissmann. "To say that spirit and flesh is inseparable is to claim too much. We can say that we have no proof of such separation, but Crookes and others claim the contrary. It is curious to observe that we to-night have trenched on the very ground Crookes trod. I am very eager now to sit with this girl—the mother and Clarke being excluded."

"Of one thing I am more than half persuaded, and that is that Clarke is a mind-reader; for how else could he know the things which the supposed ghost of my uncle recounted?"

"It is very puzzling," repeated Weissmann, deep-sunk in speculation; and in this abstraction he took himself silently away.

Kate, with an air of saying, "Now that we are alone, let's know your real mind," faced her brother with eyes of wonder. "Morton, what do you honestly think of it? Viola had nothing to do with it, did she?"

"No; but are you absolutely sure Clarke did not get loose and do things?"

"Mort, I was never more alert in my life, and I *know* he didn't move out of his chair."

"But think what it involves!"

"I don't care what it involves. So far as the senses of touch and hearing go, Clarke remained seated every minute of the time, and I certainly held both his and

Mrs. Lambert's hands the whole time while the books were being thrown."

"Well, there you are. Somebody did it." He shrugged his shoulders in an unwonted irritation.

"Why not say the spirits did it all?"

"Because that is unthinkable."

"Sir William Crookes and Dr. Zöllner, you say, believed in these disembodied intelligences—"

"Yes, but they belong to what Haeckel calls the imaginative scientists."

"You needn't quote Haeckel to me, Morton. If I believed what he preaches I would take myself and my children out of the world. I don't see how a man can look a child in the face and say such things. I can't read any of your scientific friends straight along. Their jargon is worse than anything, but I pick out enough to know that they don't believe in anything they can't see, and they won't go out of their way to see things. Do you suppose I'm going to believe that Robbie is nothing but a little animal, and that if he should die his soul would disappear like a vapor?"

"I can only repeat that the converse is unthinkable. There is no room in my philosophy for the re-entrance of the dead."

"Why not? It's all very simple. We're creatures of our surroundings, aren't we? Now, sitting there in the dark to-night, it seemed to me that the people we think of as dead were all about me. It scared me at first; but, really, isn't it the most comforting faith

in the world? I've always liked the idea of the Indian's happy 'hunting-grounds'—and this is something like it."

He smiled shrewdly. "That performance to-night and this conversation would make a pretty story to lay before the president of Corlear—now wouldn't it?"

"How do you suppose he will take your going into this investigation?"

"I don't know, but I think he'll 'fire' me instanter."

"Well, let him try it! He wouldn't *dare*—"

"Oh yes, he would, if he thought I was hurting the institution. See what they did to poor little Combes, who mildly claimed to be able to hypnotize people."

"Yes, but he made himself ridiculous in the papers."

"You mean the papers made him ridiculous. Couldn't they do the same with Weissmann and me? Think of a big, sprawling, sketchy drawing in the *Blast*, with Weissmann glaring at a strangely beautiful young lady in scanty gown—his hands spread like claws upon the table, while another younger man (myself) catches at a horn floating overhead. Oh yes, there are great possibilities in to-night's entertainment. May I ask you, Mrs. Rice, to be more than usually circumspect?"

"You may, Dr. Serviss."

He rose gravely. "Very good. Now I think you would better go to bed."

"I wish your Mr. Lambert would come."

"So do I. I'm afraid he is going to ignore my sum-

mons. Unless I hear from him to-morrow I shall consider him craven or indifferent."

"What will you do then?"

His brows contracted into a frown. "I don't know. She should be freed from Clarke's immediate influence, but I don't see how I can interfere."

"I can't believe that she really cares for him; in fact, from things she said to-night, I think she fears him. He was furiously jealous of you, I could see that. And I must say you gave him cause."

He turned and looked at her in affected amazement. "Where are you heading now?"

She laughed. "Where are you drifting, my boy? I never saw any one more absorbed, and I can't say I blame you; she was lovely. Good-night." And so she left him.

Sitting thus alone in the deep of the night, the flush of his joy at the proof of Viola's innocence grew gray and cold in a profound disbelief in the reality of his experiences. "*Did* anything really happen?" he asked himself. Returning to the library with intent to study the situation he mused long upon the tumbled books, the horn, the tables, and the chairs. He put himself in Viola's seat in the attempt to conceive of some method whereby even the most skilful magician would be able to pull out tacks, rip stitches, and break tape—and then—more difficult than all, after manipulating the horn, reseat himself and restore his bonds, every tack, to its precise place. And his conversation with "Loggy," most amazing of all, came back to plague

him. What could explain that marvellous simulation of his uncle's chuckling laugh?

Yes, Viola was clearly innocent. It was impossible for her to have lifted a hand; that he decided upon finally—and yet it was almost as difficult for Clarke or Mrs. Lambert to have performed all the tricks, "Unless Kate"—he brought himself up short—"in the end, my own sister, is involved in the imposture," he exclaimed, with a sense of bewilderment.

When he dwelt on Viola's delight in her own vindication, and remembered her serene, sweet, trustful glance, a shiver of awe went over him, and the work of saving her, of healing her, seemed greater than the discovery of any new principle; but whenever his keen, definite, analytic mind took up the hit-or-miss absurd caperings of "the spirits" he paced the floor in revolt of their childish chicanery. That the soul survived death he could not for an instant entertain. Every principle of biology, every fibre woven into his system of philosophy repelled the thought. To grant one single claim of the spiritists was disaster. "No, the mother and Clarke are in league, and when the bonds are on one the other acts. I see no other explanation. I distrust Clarke utterly—but the mother is apparently very gentle and candid, and yet—Weissmann may be right. Maternal love is a very powerful emotion. That second voice was like hers. And yet, and yet, to suspect that gentle soul of deliberate deception is a terrible thing. What a world of vulgarity and disease and suspicion it all is! An

accursed world, and the history of every medium is filled with these same insane, foolish, absurd doings."

And so he trod in weary circles, returning always to the same point, with an almost audible groan. "Why, *why* was that charming girl involved in all this uncanny, hellish, destructive business? Clarke claims her. On him her fate depends. Perhaps at this moment her name and hideous reproductions of her face are being printed in all the sensational papers of the city. Oh, that crazy preacher! It may be that he has already made her rescue impossible." And always the dark, disturbing thought came at the end to trouble him. "Can she ever regain a normal relation with the world—even if I should interfere? She should have been freed from this traffic long ago. Can the science of suggestion reach her? Am I already too late?"

The conception that sank deepest and remained most abhorrent in his musings was that conveyed in her own tragic words: "*It seems to me I am becoming more and more like a public piano, an instrument on which any one can strum—and the other world is so crowded, you know!*"

"If there is any manhood left in Lambert he must assert it or I will throttle Clarke myself," he muttered through clinched teeth. "I ran away two years ago—I evaded my duty yesterday, but I do not intend to do so now. I will not sit by and see that sweet girl's will, her very reason, overthrown by a fanatic preacher eager for notoriety. I will see her again and demand

to know from her own lips whether she is in consent to be his wife. I cannot believe it till she tells me so, and then I can decide as to future action."

And at the moment he was comforted by the recollection of something timidly confiding in her parting smile.

XV

VIOLA REVOLTS FROM CLARKE

NO sooner were they seated in their carriage than Clarke broke forth in harsh protest. "You must not think of leaving Pratt's house at this time."

"Why not?" asked Viola, roused by the tone of his voice, which was even less considerate than his words.

"Because it will displease him—may possibly alienate him just at a moment when we need him most. He will not consent to be shut out from these test-sittings; on the contrary, he is likely to insist on their taking place in his own library. Furthermore, I don't see why you are in haste to leave so sumptuous an abode."

"Because I hate him, and all connected with him." Her voice was colored with a fierce disgust. "That is the reason, and reason enough."

"You must not let him know that."

"I don't care if he knows it or not. We are not dependent on him or his house."

"Yes, we are! He is most important to all of us until our tests are over and my book in type. I need his indorsement besides. He is very bitter and vindictive with those whom he thinks should be very grateful, and we must not anger him; we can't afford it."

Mrs. Lambert mildly protested. "I'm sure Mr. Pratt will not think of detaining us if father thinks it best for us to go, and I confess I am anxious to get away myself, Tony. He has been very disagreeable lately."

Clarke went on: "We must continue to let him think his advice and aid invaluable till our book is out, then we can cut loose from him. Our policy—"

Rebellion was in Viola's heart as she cuttingly interrupted: "You speak as if we were in league to cheat him of something. You have always told me that my powers were 'dedicated to the good of the world,' but lately you talk as if they were dedicated to your personal advancement in some way. Now which do you really mean?"

He saw his mistake. Once or twice before he had met her complete opposition, and he feared it. His voice suppled, became persuasive. "I mean, Viola, that in entering upon a great contest—one whose issue is to electrify the civilized world—"

"I don't believe it. What does the world care about a little speck of humanity like me? Professor Serviss is nearer right when he says that converting people to any creed is a thankless task. Ask grandfather to let me live my own life. He listens to you. Tell him I'm tired and—"

"He has promised to be easier on you after we have won our battle."

"But I dread the battle—oh, how I dread it! Professor Serviss says we will lose."

Clarke broke in, sharply: "Please don't quote what Serviss says. His view is that of the worldly wise materialist. You should listen to my advice—not his."

"You said you were anxious to have him on the committee."

"Yes, because I thought his name would count, and that he could bring Weissmann—but now I distrust him. He is too bigoted."

As he continued in this strain he stood in dark contrast to Morton, and the girl could not but wince under the revelation he was unconsciously making. "Anthony, you have talked in that strain ever since we came East. Nothing but using people, using people, all the time. You've been constantly running after those who could 'be of use to us!' and I don't like it. Every word you're saying now makes me doubt your sincerity. I was ashamed of you to-night—I am ashamed of you now. How can I respect you when you say things like that?"

He again tacked. "I do it all for the furtherance of our faith. To do our work we *must* have authority. It is always necessary to make a big stir in the world in order to do good—think of Christ defying the money-changers and making a scene in the temple!"

She pursued her way. "It's the tone of your voice that scares me. You're a different person since we came here—you've been harsh and cruel to me." Her voice choked, and yielding to a flood of doubt she cried out: "I've lost faith in you. This ends it all, I will

never marry you! I don't care what my 'guides' say. I daren't trust myself to you—now that's the truth."

The mother was aghast. "Why, Viola Lambert! What a terrible thing to say!"

"I can't help it, mother—that is my decision."

Clarke blundered a third time. "I won't release you! This mood is all the influence of those accursed pagans we have just left. That man Serviss has been an evil influence upon you from the very first. He has no God in his heart. You must keep away from that home—it is destructive."

"It is not!" she retorted, fiercely. "It is beautiful and honest and—sane, and I'm going there as often as they will let me—and I'm going to leave the Pratt house to-morrow! I will not stay there another day."

"There are others to be consulted about this," he grimly answered. "You have tried playing truant before."

She was now in full tide of revolt. "I am going to leave that house if I fall dead in the streets. I am going if 'they' choke me black in the face."

He sneered. "I know where you are going!"

At this moment she hated him and everything he stood for, and her voice was hoarse with her passion. "I don't care what you say or what you do, I will not be hounded and driven around like a slave by you or Simeon Pratt any longer. I'm going to have a little life of my own if 'they' tear me in pieces for it."

This outburst, so much more intense than any which had preceded it, alarmed Clarke and appalled Mrs.

Lambert, who took her daughter in her arm with soothing words and caresses. "There, there, dearie! Don't worry—don't excite yourself. Father will not insist on your doing anything that will be harmful. He will protect you."

The girl, sobbing in reaction, bowed to the maternal bosom, feeling once more her own helplessness, receiving no help from her mother's sympathy, which was merely superficial. Her only hope of release lay in the strong, bright, self-reliant, humorous people she had just left, those to whom her grandfather and his "band" were less than shadows. They alone could save her from the despairing madness which she felt creeping upon her like a beast in the night. Her nerves, strung to dangerous tension, gave away utterly, and Clarke, realizing this, ceased to chide, and the ride ended without another word.

Pratt, who had been waiting for hours with the angry impatience of senility, met them at the door, truculent as a terrier. "What time o' night do you call this?" he asked, with insulting inflection.

Mrs. Lambert answered: "I'm very sorry, but we had a sitting, and it took longer—"

"A sitting!" He faced Viola. "What did you do that for? I told you I didn't want any sittings given unless I was present, and you promised not to give any."

"I did not!" she replied, lifting a tear-stained but imperious face to him.

"Well, Clarke did."

Clarke hastily interposed: "The 'chief control' asked for it—said he wanted to talk to some of those present."

"I don't care what the 'chief control' said—"

Viola, thoroughly roused, now faced him, pale and scornful. "What right have you to ask where I've been or what I've done? I am not your servant—nor one of your poor relatives. You seem to forget that. I will not be your guest another day! I'd leave this house this instant if I could. I came here against my wish, and I will not be insulted by you any longer. I wish I had never seen you." And with haughty step she started to pass him.

He put out a hand to stay her. "Hold on, now!"

With flashing eyes and a voice that smote him like a whip, she cried out, "Leave me alone, please!" He fell back against the wall, and she passed on and up the stairway, leaving him leaning there in dismay, his jaw lax.

The mother hastily followed, and as the door closed behind them Viola turned with blazing eyes. "This is horrible — disgraceful! I hope you enjoy being treated like that! How can you endure it? How can you ask me to endure it? If Anthony Clarke possessed one shred of real manhood— But he hasn't. He's so selfishly bent on his own plans he's willing to let me suffer anything. I'm done with him, mother. You needn't try to find excuse for him. I don't see how I endured him so long. He must never touch me again."

"Don't do anything rash, child."

"Will you submit to more insult? You can stay on till you are ordered out of the house if you like, but I will not!"

"But you know they advise it."

The girl turned, a new tone in her voice. "There, now, mother, we come back to that again! I'm tired of hearing that. If they insist on our staying here I will be sure they are the voices of devils and not those they claim to be. I don't believe my father would ask me to stay in a house where the very servants sniff at us. I don't believe he would let Anthony make use of me in this way. Professor Serviss calls our faith a delusion, and to-night I almost hope he's right. I have lost the spirit of the martyr, and everything seems foolish to me."

Mrs. Lambert regarded her daughter with horror. "Child, some earth-bound spirit has surely taken possession of you."

"I hope it will stay till to-morrow—till I get out of this house," she replied, and went to her own room without a good-night kiss, leaving her mother hurt and dismayed.

A few moments later Clarke knocked at the sitting-room door. "Julia, here is a message I want you to give to Viola."

As she opened to him he faced her, pale and tremulous, all his anger, all his resolution gone. "She was unjust to me," he said, humbly; "take her this." He

extended a folded leaf of paper in a hand that partook of the pallor of his face.

"You poor boy," she exclaimed, her heart wrung by his suffering, "you mustn't mind what she said—it was only a girlish pet."

"Mother," he cried, passionately, "to lose her now would kill me. She is my hope, my stay, my God! She has stabbed me to the heart to-night. Did she mean it? She can't mean it!"

She patted him on the shoulder. "Go to bed, laddie, it's only a mood. She will be all sunshine to-morrow. It's only a reaction from a wearisome day—be patient and don't worry."

"She tortured me deliberately," he went on, wildly. "She let that man take her hand. She smiled at him in a way that set my brain on fire. I tried to be calm. I didn't intend to speak harshly, but I wanted to kill him when he said good-night to her. May God eternally damn his soul if he tries to steal her from me!"

She recoiled from his fury. "Tony! What are you saying?"

"I mean it! Do you think I will submit to his treachery? I told him she was mine, and yet he took her hand—he leaned to her—he looked into her face." His eyes blazed with such wild light that the gentle woman shrank and shivered.

"Tony, you are letting your imagination run away with you. Go to bed this instant," she commanded, in a voice that trembled.

He went away at last, weeping, miserably maudlin, almost incoherent, and when she closed and locked the door upon him she dropped into a chair, and for the first time since her husband's death gave way to tears of bewilderment and despair.

XVI

THE HOUSE OF DISCORD

SURELY Simeon's house that night was a place of tormenting and tumult—the meeting-place of spirits whose dispositions were to evil fully inclined, and of mortals whose natures were upon the edge of combat. Viola, in full revolt, would not even permit her mother to come to her. Clarke, in an agony of love and hate, paced his room or sat in dejected heap before his grate. Mrs. Lambert, realizing that something sorrowful was advancing upon her, lay awake a long time hoping her daughter would relent and steal in to kiss her good-night, but she did not, and at last the waters of sleep rolled in to submerge and carry away her cares.

Viola, made restless by her disgust of Pratt as well as by her loss of respect and confidence in Clarke, did not lose herself till nearly dawn. Her mind was at first busy with the past, filled with a procession of the many things he had done to enrich her life. She was troubled by the remembrance of the grave, sad courtesy of his intercourse in the days just following his wife's death. At that time his kindly supervision of her music and his suggestions for her reading had given

him dignity and romantic charm. "He was nice then," she said to herself. "If only he had stopped there." When he fell at her feet in the attempt to rouse her pity he had been degraded in her eyes. His whole manner towards her became that of suppliant—beseeching the "guides" to sanction their ultimate union. She burned with shame as she thought of her tacit acquiescence in this arrangement. "You have no right to interfere with my—with such things," she now said to the invisible ones. "I do not love Anthony Clarke. I don't even respect him any longer."

He had, indeed, become almost as offensive to her as Pratt, and the picturesque, soulful presence which he affected was at the moment repugnant. In contrast to the young scientist he was mentally and morally sick, and the world which he inhabited (and which she shared with him) hopelessly askew. Of this she had a clear perception as her mind recalled and dwelt upon the taste, the comfort, the orderly cheer of the Serviss home.

"We never made the spirit-world so awful. Mamma did not take such an excited view of it all. What has produced this change in us? Tony has. He has carried us out into a nasty world and he has set us among frauds and fanatics, and I will not suffer it any longer."

She did him an injustice, but she was at the same time right. Mrs. Lambert, left to herself, would have kept a serene mind no matter what the manifestations might be. With her the world of spirit interpenetrated

the world of every-day life, and the one was quite as natural as the other and of helpful, cheering effect. She had remained quite as normal in her ways of thought as when in Colorow, and aside from her dependence upon the spirit-world for guidance would not have seemed at any point to be akin to either fraud or fanatic.

At last the girl's restless mind, cleared of its anger, its doubts and its doles, came back to rest upon the handsome, humorous, refined face of young Dr. Serviss. She felt again the touch of his deft, strong hands, and heard again the tender cadence of his voice as he said: "I hope you are not in pain? We will release you very soon." She dwelt long upon the final scene at the table, when, with a jesting word on his lips, but with love in his eyes, he took her hand to remove the marks of her bonds; and the flush that came to her was not one of anger—it rose from the return of her joy of those few moments of sweet companionship.

How sane and strong and safe he was. "He does not believe in our faith, but he does not hate me. How Dr. Weissmann loves him! They are like father and son."

Thinking upon these people and their home, with their griefs, their easy, off-hand, penetrating comments, their laughter filling her ears, the girl grew drowsy with some foreknowledge of happier days to come, and fell asleep with a faint smile upon her lips.

She woke late to find her mother bending over her, and lifting her arms she drew the gray head down to

her soft, young bosom and penitently said: "Mamma, forgive me. I am sorry I spoke as I did. I am not angry this morning, but I am determined. We must go away from here this very day."

The mother did not at once reply, but when she spoke her voice trembled a little. "I guess you're right, dearie. This house seems like a prison to me this morning. But what troubles me most is this: Why do Maynard and father permit us to stay here? I am afraid of Mr. Pratt—everybody says he will make us trouble, and yet our dear ones urge us to remain."

"Mamma," gravely replied Viola, "I want to tell you something that came to me this morning. I wonder if *what grandfather says is not made up of what Pratt and Anthony want?*"

"What do you mean, child?" asked the mother, sitting back into a chair and staring at her daughter with vague alarm.

"I mean that—that—grandfather, strong as he seems to be, is influenced in some way by Tony. He goes against my wishes and against your wishes, but *he never goes against Tony's*."

The mother pondered. "But that is because Tony is content to follow *his* will."

The girl lost her firm tone. "I know that interpretation can be given to it, but to-day I *feel* that it is the other way, and, besides, it may be that grandfather doesn't realize all our troubles."

The mother rose. "It's all very worrisome, and

I wish some change would come. I dread to meet Mr. Pratt, but I suppose I must."

"Don't go down. I don't intend to see him again if I can avoid it. Ring for your coffee and take your breakfast here with me this morning."

"No. That would only make him angry. I'll go down."

"I don't care what he says, mamma, I shall do as I like hereafter."

With this defiant reply ringing in her ears, Mrs. Lambert went slowly down the stairs to find the master of the house, sullen, sour, and vindictive, breakfasting alone in his great dining-room. As she timidly entered he looked up from his toast with a grunt of greeting, and Mrs. Lambert, seeing that his resentment still smouldered, stopped on the threshold pale with premonition of assault. She would have fled had she dared to do so, but the maid drew a chair for her, and so she seated herself opposite him in silence.

"Where's that girl?" he asked, harshly.

"She's not feeling very well this morning, so I told her she needn't come down to breakfast."

He grunted in scorn. "What happened over there last night? Everybody seems upset by it. I want to know all about it. You had a sitting, did you?"

"Yes."

"Whose idea was that—Clarke's?"

"No, father wanted to speak with Dr. Serviss and Dr. Weissmann."

"Weissmann was there, was he? What did *he* say?"

'He seemed impressed."

"What happened?"

"Father came, as usual—"

"I mean what happened outside the séance? Something set that girl against me and upset Clarke. I want to know what it was."

"I don't think anything was said of you at all."

"Yes, there was. You can't fool me. Somebody warned that girl against me. The whole thing seems funny to me." (By funny he meant strange.) "You go away from my house for a dinner against my will—leave me in the lurch—and come home at one o'clock in the morning with faces that would sour milk, and now here you are all avoiding me this morning. It just convinces me that if we're going to carry on this work together we've got to have a definite understanding. You've got to stop going to such houses and giving séances without my permission. I won't have that under any conditions."

Clarke, who had appeared at the doorway, a worn and troubled spectre of dismay, now put in a confirmatory word. "You are quite right, Simeon. That house reeks with the talk of wine-bibbers and those who make life a witticism. Such an atmosphere profoundly affects Viola."

Pratt glowered at him with keen, contemptuous glance. "You look as if you'd been drawn through a knot-hole. What happened to *you?*" As Clarke did not reply to this he took another line of inquiry. "About this sitting, what was the upshot?"

"It was a very remarkable test-sitting, and seemed to make a profound impression. The conditions were severe—"

"Why was I left out? That's what I want to know."

"That's what puzzles me. McLeod, who promised us never to have a circle without you, insisted on the sitting there—"

"How do you know he did? Did he write or speak to you?"

"No—he *impressed* the psychic."

"I don't trust that girl in such a house. Did you talk with Weissmann about heading the committee?"

"Yes, but"—he hesitated—"they both insisted that if they took the matter up both of us must be excluded."

Pratt bristled. "And you consented to that?"

"I did not. I insisted that the sittings take place here and that we be present. They would not listen to that, so I think I'll go ahead on my programme and decide upon the personnel of the committee afterwards."

Pratt regarded him fixedly. "I'm not sure I like your programme, my friend. I've been thinking it over lately, and I've just about come to the conclusion that you'd better not issue that challenge."

"Why not?"

Pratt snapped like a peevish bull-dog. "Because I don't want it done—that's all the reason you need. I've never made any concessions to reach these damn scientists, and I don't intend to begin now. You are

planning to involve us in a whole lot of noise and sensation, and I don't like it. Furthermore, I don't intend to submit to it."

Clarke was too irritable to take this quietly, and his eyes blazed. "You're very sensitive all at once. When did you reach this new point of view?"

"Never you mind about that; I've reached it, and I intend to maintain it. Why, you simple-minded jackass, these scientists will eat you up. They'll make a monkey of me and disgrace the girl. They'll pretend to expose her—the press will be on their side—and I will be made the butt of all their slurring gibes. I won't have it!"

"You're too nervous about the press," replied Clarke, loftily. "You're all wrong about the papers. They'll take a malicious joy in girding at the scientists as 'the men who know it all.' They'll have their fling at us, of course, but it won't hurt."

"Oh, it won't! Well, it may not hurt you—it's a fine stroke of advertising for you—but I don't need that kind of publicity. That's settled! Now, about this man Serviss"—he turned to Mrs. Lambert—"is he married?"

"No."

"I thought not. How long has he known Viola?"

"It's nearly two years since he came to Colorow; but he has only seen her a few times—"

Pratt cut her short. "I begin to understand. You'd better not let him mix in here—he's too young and too good-looking to conduct experiments of this

kind with your girl. If you had any sense, Clarke, you'd see that for yourself."

Clarke's expression changed. His cheeks grew livid with his passion, and his eyes burned with the same wild light that had filled them as he looked across the room at Morton bending over Viola's hand. Pratt's brutal frankness had cleared his own thought and re-aroused his sense of proprietorship in the girl. Until that dinner came with its revelation, he had thought of Serviss merely as the scientist to be used to further his own plans. Now he knew him for what he was—a young and dangerous rival. With a sinking of the heart he suspected him to be a successful rival.

He rose from the table and left the room, and Mrs. Lambert followed him fearful of what he might do in his rage.

"Tony, Tony!" she called.

He turned and faced her, his face set in horrible lines, his fists clinched. "I've been a fool, a fool!" he declared, through set teeth. "Why didn't you warn me? I should have made her safely my own before I came East. She loves him, but he shall not have her—by God he shall not! Where is she? Tell her I must see her!"

She pleaded for delay, and at last calmed him so that he left her and went to his room. She then hastened to Viola and locked the door behind her.

"Viola, dear, get ready! We must leave this house at once," she said, breathlessly.

"What has happened?" asked Viola.

Mrs. Lambert took time to think. "It was very disagreeable. They are wrangling again about that challenge and about you."

"About me! Yes, that's what wears on me—they wrangle about me as if I had no right to say what part I am to take. But it's all over, mother; unless grandfather holds me by the throat every mortal minute to-day I'm going into the street—"

A knock at the door startled them both, but it proved to be the maid, who said, "Here is a note from Mr. Clarke, miss; he said, 'be sure and bring an answer,' miss."

The note was a passionate appeal for a meeting, but Viola wrote across it in firm letters, "No. It is useless," and returned it to the girl. "Take that to him," she said, careless of the fact that her refusal was open to the eyes of the messenger.

When they were again in private she said: "We'll go if we have to telephone the police to help us. And I'm going to wire Papa-Joe to come and take us home."

"You are cruel to Tony, child."

"No, I'm not! He must understand, once for all, that I belong to myself. I never really cared for him. Deep in my heart I was afraid of him, and now he has grown so egotistical that he is willing to sacrifice me to his own aims, and I hate him. I will not see him again if I can avoid it."

The mother protested less and less strongly, for she was forced to admit that something fine and true had gone out of her idol, and that he now stood in a new

and harsh light. All the hard lines of his face appeared to her, and his pallor, his deep-set eyes were those of a sick and restless soul. She no longer rejoiced at the thought of giving her daughter into his hands.

Clarke was truly in a pitiable state of incertitude and despair. His oration, his interdicted challenge, his book, his religion were all swallowed in by the one great passion which now flooded and filled his brain—his love for Viola. "She belongs to me," he repeated, as he walked his room with shaking limbs, a dry, hard knot in his throat, his eyes hot with tears that would not fall. "She must surrender herself to me—finally and now—to-day. I will wait no longer. She must leave this house at once—but she must go as my wife! She is right. Pratt is a beast—a savage. He will rage—he will vilify us both, but we will defy him. Our 'guides' will confound him. We are, after all, not dependent upon him. We can go on—" The maid, returning, handed him Viola's answer and went hastily out. He read it and reread it till its finality burned into his brain, then dropped into a deep chair and there lay for a long time in despairing stupor.

Was it all over, then? Was her final decision in that curt scrawl? She had returned his own note as if with intent to emphasize her refusal to see him, and yet only a few days ago she had assented to all his plans, leaning upon his advice. What had produced this antagonism? What evil influence was at work?

He rose on a sudden, fierce return of self-mastery,

and went to Mrs. Lambert's door and knocked, and when she opened to him demanded of her a full explanation. "What is the matter? Is she sick or is she hatefully avoiding me?"

"She's all upset, Anthony. Don't worry, she will see you by-and-by."

"She *must* see me! After what she said last night I can't think—I am in agony. What is the matter with us all? Yesterday we were triumphant; to-day I feel as if everything were sinking under my feet. She shall not leave me! I will not have it so! Tell her I insist on seeing her! I beg her to speak to me if only for a moment."

"I will tell her you are here." She left him at the threshold, a haggard and humble suitor, while she knocked at her daughter's door. "Viola, child, Anthony is here. Let me in just a moment."

As he waited the half-frenzied man noted the absence of certain family portraits and cried aloud, poignantly: "She is packing! She is going away!" And when Mrs. Lambert returned he seized her by the arm, his eyes wild and menacing. "Tell me the truth! She is preparing to leave."

Mrs. Lambert looked away. "I tried to reason with her, Anthony. I wanted her to 'sit for council,' but she's so crazy to get away she will not do it. She will hardly speak to *me*."

"She must not go—she shall not leave me! I will not permit,her to go to him!" His voice rose and his lifted hand shook.

"Hush, Tony! She will hear you. Please go away and let me deal with her."

He lifted his face and spoke with closed eyes. "Donald McLeod, if you are present, intercede for me. Bring her to me. Command her to remain. You gave her to me. You led us here. Will you permit her to ruin all our plans? Stretch out your hand in power. Do you hear me?" There was no answer to his appeal, neither tap nor rustle of reply. In the silence his heart contracted with fear. "Have you deserted me, too?" Then his brain waxed hot with mad hate. His hand clinched in a savage vow. "I swear I will kill her before I will let her go to that man! Together we will enter the spirit-world."

He sprang towards the door, but Mrs. Lambert, with eyes expanded in horror, caught him by the arm. "Tony, Tony! What are you doing? Are you crazy?"

Her hand upon his arm, her face drawn and white with fear, recalled him to himself. He laughed harshly. "No—oh no; I'm not mad, but it's enough to make me so. I didn't mean it—of course I didn't mean it."

"You are dreadfully wrought up, Tony. Go out and walk and clear your brain, and by-and-by we'll sit for council."

In the end she again persuaded him to return to his chamber, but he did not leave the house—neither could he rest. Every word the girl had said of his selfishness, his egotism, burned like poison in his brain. Had his hold on her been so slight, after all? "She despises me. She hates me!" And in his heart he despised and

hated himself. He cursed his poverty, his lack of resource. "Why am I, the evangel of this faith, dependent on others for revelation. Why must I beg and cringe for money, for power?" He was in the full surge of this flood of indignant query when Pratt shuffled into his room.

"Some reporters below want to see you. I guess you better—"

Clarke turned, the glare of madness in his eyes. "Curse you and your reporters! Go away from me! I don't want to be bothered by you nor by them."

Pratt stared in dull surprise, which turned slowly to anger. "What's the matter with you *now?*" he roared. "Damn you, anyway. You've upset my whole house with your crazy notions. Everything was moving along nicely till you got this bug of a big speech into your head, and then everything in my life turns topsy-turvy. To hell with you and your book! You can't use me to advertise yourself. I want you to understand that right now. I see your scheme, and it don't work with me."

He was urging himself into a frenzy—his jaws working, his eyes glittering, like those of a boar about to charge, all his concealed dislike, his jealousy of the preacher's growing fame and of his control of Viola turning rapidly into hate. "I don't know why you're eating my bread," he shouted, hoarsely. "I've put up with you as long as I am going to. You're nothing but a renegade preacher, a dead-beat, and a hypocrite. Get out before I kick you out!"

This brought the miserable evangel to a stand. "I'll go," he said, defiantly, "but I'll take your psychic with me—we'll go together."

"Go and be damned to the whole tribe of ye!" retorted Pratt, purple with fury. "Go, and I'll publish you for a set o' leeches—that's what I'll do," and with this threat he turned on his heel and went out, leaving Clarke stupefied, blinded by the force of his imprecations.

The situation had taken another turn for the worse. To leave the house of his own will was bad enough; to be kicked out by his host, and to be followed by his curse was desolating. "And yet this I could endure if only she would speak to me—would go with me."

He fell at last into a deep gulf of self-pity. Yesterday, now so far away, so irrevocable, was full of faith, of promise, of happiness, of grand purpose; now every path was hid by sliding sand. The world was a chaos. His book, his splendid mission, his communion with Adele, his very life, depended upon this wondrous psychic. Without her the world was a chaos, life a failure, and his faith a bitter, mocking lie. With a sobbing groan he covered his face, his heart utterly gone, his brain benumbed, his future black as night.

And yet outside the window, in reach of his hand, the spring sunlight vividly fell. The waves of the river glittered like glass and ships moved to and fro like butterflies. The sky was full of snowy clouds—

harbingers of the warm winds of spring. Sparrows twittered along the eaves, and the mighty city, with joy in its prosaic heart, was pacing majestically into the new and pleasant month.

XVII

WHEN DOCTORS DISAGREE

AT breakfast next morning Morton took up the paper with apprehension, and though he found Clarke's name spread widely on the page, he was relieved to find only one allusion to the unknown psychic on whose mystic power the orator was depending.

"She has another day of grace," he said to himself, thinking of Lambert.

All the way down to his laboratory he pretended to read the news, but could not succeed in interesting himself in the wars and famines of the world, so much more vital and absorbing were his own passions and retreats, so filmy was the abstract, so concrete and vital the particular. A million children might be starving in India, a thousand virgins about to be sold to slavery in Turkestan; but such intelligence counted little to a man struggling with doubt of the woman he loves, and questioning further the right of any philosopher to marry and bring children into a life of bafflement and pain and ultimate annihilation.

This must ever be so. The particular must outweigh the general, and philosophers, even the monists, must continue to be inconsistent. The individual

must of necessity consider himself first and humanity afterwards; for if all men considered the welfare of the race to the neglect of self, the race would die at the root and the individual perish of his too-widely diffused pity. To be the altruist, one must first be the egoist (say the philosophers), to give, one must first have.

The questions which filled this implacable young investigator's mind were these: Is my love worthy? And again: Dare I, insisting on man's unity with all other organisms and subject to the same laws of extinction, entertain the idea of marriage? If the theories I hold are true—if the soul of a child is no more than the animating principle of the ant or the ape (and this I cannot deny)—then of what avail is human life? By what right do men bring other organisms into being knowing that they will only flutter a little while in the sun like butterflies and die as unavailingly as moths?

Up to this time he had accepted with a certain calm pitilessness the most inexorable tenets of the evolutionists, and had defended them with remorseless zeal; but on this fair spring morning, with love for Viola stirring in his heart, he found himself far less disposed to crush and confound. He acknowledged a growing sympathy with those who mourn the tragic fact of death.

All that he had read concerning clairvoyance, telepathy, hypnotism, and their allied subjects began to assume new significance and a weightier importance.

He was annoyed to find himself profoundly concerned as to whether the power of "suggestion" was anything like as coercive as many eminent men believed it to be, and in this awakened interest he 'phoned Tolman (upon reaching his desk), asking him to lunch with him at the club. "If there is anything in his philosophy I want to know it," he said, as he turned to his desk.

He found no word from Lambert, and this troubled him. "If he does not come to-day I must act alone," he concluded, and attempted to take up his work, but found his brain preoccupied, his hand heavy.

Weissmann came in late, looking old and worn. He, too, had passed a restless night. He nodded curtly to his assistant and set to work without reference to the sitting or the psychic; and yet Morton was very sure his chief's mind was as profoundly engaged as his own, and a little later in the forenoon he stopped at his desk and said: "Lunch with me, doctor; I have asked Tolman, and I want to talk things over with you both."

Weissmann consented in blunt abstraction, and the work proceeded quite in the regular routine so far as he was concerned.

Tolman was the farthest remove from the traditional mesmerist in appearance, being a brisk, blond man of exceeding neatness and taste in dress. He wore the most fashionable clothing, his hair and beard were in perfect order, and his hands were very beautiful. He was, indeed, vain of his slender fingers and gesticulated overmuch. His voice also was a lit-

tle over-assertive, but his eyes were clear, steady, and strong.

As they took seats in the cheerful sunlit dining-room of the Mid-day Club, the three theorists formed a notable group and one that attracted general comment, but their conversation would have astonished the easy-going publishers and professional men who were chatting at neighboring tables, so full of interrogation and assertion was each specialist.

As Tolman rose to speak to a friend at a table across the room, Weissmann confidentially remarked: "I did not sleep last night, not a wink. I could not satisfy myself about those performances. Therefore I smoked and studied. Last night's test proved nothing to me except that the girl had nothing to do with the phenomena."

The young man's heart glowed at these words and he feelingly replied. "To prove that would mean a great deal to me, doctor."

Weissmann's tired face lighted up. "So! Then you are interested in her? You love her? I was right, eh?" he asked, with true German directness.

Serviss protested. "Oh no! I haven't said that; but it troubled me to think of her as a possible trickster. Please don't hint such a thing in Tolman's hearing."

As the hypnotist returned to his seat, Serviss opened up the special discussion by asking him his opinion of the claims of spiritualists.

This question threw Tolman into a roar. "That from you, and in the presence of Weissmann, is a

'facer'! What has come over Morton Serviss that he should invite me to a lunch to talk over a case of hysterico-epilepsy, and start in by asking my opinion of spiritualism? Come, now, out with the real question."

Serviss perceived the folly of any subterfuge, and briefly presented Viola's history, without naming her, of course, and ended by describing in detail the sitting of the night before, while Tolman ate imperturbably at his chop and toast with only now and then a word or a keen glance.

When the story was finished, he looked up, like a lawyer assuming charge of a witness. "Now there's a whole volume to say upon what you've told me, and our time is limited to a chapter. Make your questions specific. What point do you particularly want my opinion on?"

"First of all, has the preacher in this case been controlling the girl?"

"Undoubtedly, but not to the extent you imagine."

"Has the mother?"

"Yes. She has been a great and constant source of suggestion."

"You would advise taking the patient out of her present surroundings, would you not?"

"Yes, that would be helpful, but is not absolutely necessary. The essential step is to fill her mind with counter-suggestions." Here he launched into an exposition of the principles and potentialities of hypnotism, and was in full tide of it when Weissmann interrupted to ask:

"But suppose these phenomena actually and independently exist? Suppose that they are not illusions but objective realities, how then will your suggestion help?"

This put Tolman on his mettle. He entered into a discourse filled with phrases like "secondary consciousness" "collective hallucinations," "nerve-force," wherein, while admitting that great and good men believed in the phenomena of "spiritism," he concluded that they were overhasty in assigning causes. For his part, the realm of hallucination was boundless. "The mind has the power to create a world of its own —it often does so, and—"

Here Weissmann again broke in. "You will enroll yourself with Aksakof and Von Hartmann and Lombroso?"

"Not precisely. They admit the reality of the appearances. I do not believe that the mind has power to dematerialize objects, as in the case of your wine-glass last night, which was a trick."

"But the mind can produce a blister without external cause," said Serviss. "You hypnotic sharps have proved that it can also deaden nerves and heal skin diseases, if not bone fractures."

"Yes, we produce marvellous cures within the organism, but we draw the line at the periphery of the body. Telekinesis is to me the word of a lively fictionist."

"One is as easy to believe as the other, and Crookes, Lodge, Lombrosco, Tamburini, Aksakof, Von Hart-

mann, all believe in the reality of these happenings," retorted Serviss. "They differ only in their explanations. One party believes them due to disembodied spirits, the other relates them to the inexplicable action of a certain psychic force generated within the sitters and acting on objects at a distance. I am not yet persuaded of the phenomena, but I am progressing. I am willing to admit that these gentlemen are entitled to a respectful hearing."

Tolman resumed his own explanation, and after several premises and general statements put a case. "For example, take automatic writing. You begin by placing a pad and pencil before the mind. That suggests writing—sets up a certain train of associated ideas. These ideas have the innate tendency to realize themselves, the will of the subject being weakened. This is why the left hand is often used. These ideas disassociate themselves from the rest of the mental organism and may, in highly developed cases, become what is called a 'secondary personality.' They may give a weak imitation of discourse. They may assume a vague resemblance to some other individual, but they can never give a full statement or a new statement. This is why all the so-called spirit communications are so fragmentary and so futile. The cure of any such state is to set up a strong current of counter-suggestion."

Weissmann asked: "Is it not extravagant to say that there can exist in the unconscious mind of a young girl, a skill so great as will enable her to

draw intricate patterns, manipulate objects at a distance, and impersonate dead persons unknown to her?"

"But there you have passed into the region of hallucination or deceit."

"I'm not so sure of that. I do not see how fraud or hallucination can come into the most of what we saw last night. I will admit that coming alone by itself the test would have little weight; but it does not come alone. The literature of the subject is great and growing."

Tolman smiled. "Yes, the newspapers are filled with accounts of mediums exposed."

They entered then upon a discussion of the trance, and passed to a consideration of multiple personality, which brought out many singular facts. "We learned also," Tolman said in discussion of a certain case which he had studied, "that certain drugs have the power of arousing specific nerve-centres, and that in cases of alternating personality by flooding the brain with blood we were able to bring back the normal self."

"Doesn't that weaken your argument of the power of mind over matter?" asked Serviss, profoundly interested in this assertion.

"Not at all. It is my belief in the drug that influences the patient."

Serviss laughed and Weissmann's mouth twitched. "You cannot head them off—these modern mind-specialists! They plunge into the subconscious like prairie-dogs into the sod, only to come up at a new point."

Tolman's interest in the unknown psychic was now keen, and he asked for a chance to try his powers.

To this Serviss was strongly averse. "I have never had a chance at a case of this kind and I would very much like to experiment. Perhaps I may need you; but if suggestion is what you claim it to be, if the power is really in the mind of the subject, I can arouse it as well as any one. But as a believer in matter I would like to ally myself with the drug you mention."

"Very well, here is the prescription." He jotted down on a card a few hieroglyphic phrases. "And now I must hurry away. I'm sorry, but I have an engagement."

Serviss took his hand cordially. "I'm glad to have had this talk with you. It has suggested a new train of thought to me."

"If you need me on the case you mention, be sure to let me know. It sounds mighty interesting, and I'd like a hand in it."

After Tolman left, Weissmann remarked: "There is a school of thinkers which believes that exceptional individuals may have the power to effect molecular changes in matter at a distance."

"Yes, I know that. I spent most of the night reading the Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, in which that theory has a large place."

"Well, may it not be that Miss Lambert has this power? May it not be that she is able in some such way as that suggested by Lombroso, to impart cerebral movements to the ether and so modify matter as to

produce movement of objects, telekinetic writing, and all the rest of it?"

"That is too violent an assumption. We might as well surrender to the spiritists at once. What evidence have we that Clarke did not rise and tiptoe about the room manipulating the horn himself?"

"We have our own observation, joined to the report of Crookes and Richet."

"But Crookes is discredited on this score. He belongs to what Haeckel calls 'the imaginative scientists.' So do Von Hartmann, Lombroso, Wallace, and Lodge."

"Why should that be? Why should we accept their testimony on gases and the spectrum, and exclude it when it comes to a question of phenomena new to us? 'This man is a great chemist and physicist,' you say, 'but a crazy ass when he sets to work to examine the claims of spiritism,' which is absurd and unjust. So far as I can see, he examined the phenomena of spiritism quite as a scientist should."

Morton believed that his chief was taking the opposing side out of perversity and replied: "I admit that as you read, they seem reasonable, and I also admit that the experiments with Eusapia, especially the recent ones, ought to be conclusive to my mind, but they are not. That is the singular thing — they do not convince."

"That is because we do not clear our minds of prejudice. These men are far-sighted and profound in their own lines. They have exposed themselves to

sneers by going into these new fields. They are to be honored as pioneers. Why not believe the phenomena they discuss are at least worth our attention?"

"That is Clarke's plea."

"Precisely! And he is right. I am less critical of him to-day than I was last night. He gave his psychic over into our hands. What more could we ask?"

"He might have absented himself."

"He may do that next time."

"No; he was furious when I suggested the idea."

"My interest is awakened. It may be, as Clarke says, that this young lady is about to give the world of science a new outlook. It may be that she is to out-do Home and Eusapia."

Morton's face was cold and his voice firm as he said: "Not if I can prevent it. My zeal as an investigator does not go so far as that. I intend to free her from all connection with this uneasy world, and to that end I have wired her step-father to come on, and with his assistance I hope to end Clarke's control of her and set to work upon the cure she expects of me."

Weissmann smiled indulgently. "The scientist is defeated by the lover. I see; you would exclude all others from the sitting. Very well! that shall be as you wish; but it seems a shame now when we have such a wonderful chance to duplicate the Crookes' experiments. But, as you say, it would be too much to ask of a young and lovely girl. We will sacrifice only men and the ugly crones, eh?" Morton smiled faintly

and his chief went on: "Well, now, in case you find yourself sitting—" he held up a warning hand—"I say if you find yourself unable to stop these trances—"

"I have no doubt of that—provided I can take her out of her present associations."

"Very good! I was about to say that all, or nearly all, of the phenomena of last night took place within a limited radius of the psychic. The books all came from behind her. The horn hovered near her—all of which would support the arguments of the 'psychic force' advocates. Lombroso and Tamburini both suggest that it is not absurd to say that possibly the subconscious mind may be able not merely to transmit energy, but to produce phantasmal forms, and I wondered last night whether there might not be some supernormal elongation of the psychic's arms which might enable her to seize and manipulate the horn at a distance beyond her normal reach."

"It is easier for me to believe that Mrs. Lambert did it. I am convinced that Clarke in some way played us false."

"I'm not sure of that. I am willing to grant that it is possible for the mind to alter the circulation of the blood, even to accelerate or decrease the up-building processes among the cells. If the mind can produce a pathologic process like a blister, it can also remove warts or cancer, as the hypnotists of the Charcot school claim. If the mind can move a book or a pencil without the intervention of any known form of matter, then Clarke (as well as his psychic) may be innocent,

and all that happened last night be due to thought-transference and telekinesis."

The young man shrugged his shoulders. "To admit a single one of your premises would turn all our science upside down."

Weissmann smiled musingly. "So said the Ptolmaic philosophers when Copernicus came. Yet nothing was destroyed but error—they established the truth."

"I didn't mean what I said, exactly. I meant that the whole theory is opposed to every known law of physics."

"I'm not so certain of that. I can imagine a subtler form of force than magnetism. I can imagine the mind reacting upon matter, creating in its own right by the displacement and rearrangement of the molecules of a substance—say of wood. What is a wine-glass but an appearance? No, no! It will not do to be dogmatic. We must not assume too much. We must keep open minds. Are we not advancing? Is any one nearing the farther wall? No, my boy, each year should make us less arrogant. Ten thousand years from now men will still be discovering new laws of nature just as they were ten thousand years ago. It is childish to suppose that we or any other generation will know all that is to be known. Infinite research is before us just as infinite painful groping is behind us. I do not assume to say what the future will bring to mankind. Perhaps soon—very soon, science will shift its entire battle-line from matter to mind. To say the mind is conditioned in a certain

way to-day does not mean that these conditions may not utterly change to-morrow. Great discoveries wait in the future."

"But you would not say that a new way of squaring the circle would appear—or that perpetual motion—"

"Oh no, no! Error is not a product of enlightenment. I only say that the problem which is insoluble to you and to me may be quite simple to the biologist of the twenty-second century. Once I thought I might come to know much of the universe, now I am quite certain I shall never know but a few processes—never the mystery itself."

As the old man talked with the light of prophecy in his gaunt face, the young man's imagination took wing into the future, that mighty and alluring void, black as night, yet teeming with transcendent, potential unborn men and women, and his brain grew numb with the effort and his heart humble with the moments' prophetic glance. Ay, it was true! He in his turn would seem a child of the foolish past—a fond old man to the wise future. His complacence was lost. His faith in his authorities violently shaken. He recalled a line from Whitman: "Beyond every victory there are other battles to be fought, other victories to be won." And his eyes grew dim and his thought filled with reverence for those seers of the future, and with awe of the inscrutable and ever-beckoning and ever-retiring mystery of life.

His chief resumed: "No, we pretend to larger knowledge of living organisms; but how will our text-books

be regarded by the teachers of the future? Will they not read us and smile over us as curious mixtures of truth and error—valuable as showing the state of science in our day? Do you dream of solving the mystery of life? Of bridging the chasm between the crystal and the non-nucleated cell? I do not. As I sat alone last night unable to sleep, my eyes ran over the backs of the books on my shelves—they were all there, all the great ones, Laplace, Spinoza, Descartes, Goethe, Spencer, Hegel, Kant, Darwin, all the wonder-workers. How masterful each had been in his time. How complacent of praise; how critical of the past! But here now they all stood gathering dust, and I thought: so will the unborn philosophers of the next century fold me up and put me away beside the other mouldy ones—curious but no longer useful. My book will be but an empty shell on the reef of human history. Of such cruelty are the makers of scientific advance."

Morton was profoundly moved by the note of pathos, of disillusionment in the old man's voice. "Would you have me believe that these men we doubt to-day are forerunners of the future?"

"I feel so. The materialists have had their day. Some subtler expression of matter is about to be given to the world, not as Kant gave it, but through experiment, and to men like Myers and Sir William Crookes may come great honor some day."

"You would not have us weaken in our method?"

Weissmann's manner changed. He resumed his most peremptory tone. "By no means. We must not

relax our vigilant scrutiny of fact one atom's weight, but we must keep our minds open to new messages—no matter how repulsive the source."

Morton sat for a moment in deep study, then said: "If I fail to stop the public announcement of Miss Lambert's powers, if Clarke's challenge is issued in spite of my protest, I shall ask the privilege of heading the committee in order to be present and shield her. If it comes to this, will you join me and support me?"

"With pleasure."

"But suppose the president and our board object?"

"What right have they to object? So long as I do not neglect my duties they will not dare to object."

"They will be scandalized. Two of us going into an investigation of this sort will seem to involve the whole school, and they may insist on our keeping out of it, so long as we are connected with the institution. If they ask for our resignation, the public will side with us, but all other institutions, and probably the bulk of our colleagues, will go against us. I hesitate, therefore, to ask you to take up this work. It is not a matter of bread and butter to me. I can resign, and I am thinking this is my best plan. At the same time I hope, for Miss Lambert's sake, that the public test will not be made."

Weissmann's shaggy old head lifted like that of a musing lion. "What is this opposition to me? I too can resign. What my colleagues say will not matter if I feel that I am advancing the cause of science.

Their flames will scorch, but I have a thick skin. Besides, I am old, with only a few more years to work, and if I felt I could better serve the world by going into this investigation than by remaining in the one in which I now am, I would gladly do it. I will not utterly starve."

"Not while I am able to share a crust," quickly exclaimed Serviss. "If they ask for your resignation, give it and come with me. Together we will found an institute for the study of the supra-normal. What do you say?"

Weissmann's eyes glowed with the quenchless zeal of the experimentalist. "My dear boy, I would resign now for that purpose; but I hope it will not be necessary, for your sake."

They shook hands like two adventurers setting out on their joint exploration of a distant and difficult country; but this moment of exaltation was followed in Serviss's mind by a sense of having in some way dedicated Viola to the advancement of science rather than to the security of the fireside and to the joys of wife and mother.

XVIII

LAMBERT INTERVENES

UPON his return to his desk Serviss was delighted to find a telegram from Lambert, stating the time of his arrival, and asking for a meeting. There was a note of decision, almost command, in the wording of the despatch, which denoted that the miner had taken his warning to heart and was prepared for prompt and authoritative action.

The time of the train being near, Serviss closed the lid of his desk and took a car for the station—immensely relieved of responsibility, yet worn and troubled by a multitude of confused and confusing speculations. All the way to the depot, and while he stood waiting outside the gates, he pondered on the surprising change in Weissmann's thought, and also upon the momentous covenant between them. More than ever before he felt the burden and the mystery of organic life. Around him flowed an endless stream of humankind, rushing, spreading—each drop in the flood an immortal soul (according to the spiritist), attended by invisible guardians, watching, upholding, warning—"and the whole earth swarms with a billion other similar creatures with the same needs, the same des-

tiny; for, after all, the difference between a Zulu and a Greek is not much greater than that between a purple-green humming-bird and a canary; and to think that this wave of man appearing to-day on the staid old earth, like the swarms of innumerable insects of June, is but one of a million other waves of a million other years. To consider, furthermore, that all those who have lived and died are still sentient! What a staggering, monstrous conception! Nor is this all. According to the monist conception there is no line at which we can say here the animal stops and the soul of man begins, so that ants and apes are claimants for immortality. If the individual man persists after death, why not his faithful collie? No, this theory will not do. It is far less disturbing to think of all these hurrying bipeds as momentary nodes of force — minute eddies on the boundless stream of ether."

The gates opened and another river of travellers, presumably from the great plains of the Middle West, poured forth, quite undistinguishable in general appearance from those which had preceded them; and, dropping his speculation, Morton peered among these faces, not quite sure that he would know Lambert if he saw him. As a matter of fact, he would have missed him had not the miner laid a hand upon his arm, saying, quaintly: "Howdy, professor, howdy! What's the state of the precinct?"

He was quite conventional in all outward signs, save for his red-brown complexion and the excessive new-

ness of his hand-bag. "How are all the folks?" he went on to ask, with a keen glance.

"They were quite well when I saw them, but they need you. You're not an hour too soon."

"Is it as bad as that?" he exclaimed, anxiously. "What is it all about?"

"Wait till we reach a carriage, then I'll put you in possession of all the facts," replied Serviss, and led the way to a cab. "I am greatly relieved to see you to-day."

"I came as soon as your wire reached me; but the messenger arrived during a big snow-storm, and the trail was impassable for a day. Now, then, professor, let's have the whole story," he said, as the driver slammed the door. "Where are they and what is the matter?"

"They are here in New York, housed with a man named Pratt, a wealthy spiritist, and they are in excellent bodily health, but your daughter is threatened with a publicity which is most dangerous."

"How is that?"

"Clarke has decided to give an oration in the Spirit Temple announcing his faith and defying the unbeliever. As the climax of this discourse he intends to announce your daughter's name and her willingness to meet any test. She objects to this publicity, but Pratt, your wife, and the 'guides' all unite in forcing her into acquiescence."

"I see," said Lambert, reflectively. "When does this speech come off?"

"Sunday morning at eleven."

"I reckon I can stop that," was the miner's laconic comment.

"But this is not the only danger," Serviss hurried on to say. "This man Pratt is a rankly selfish old man, who is surrounded by flatterers and those who live off his desire to commune with his dead wife and daughters. He is accustomed to have his own private 'mediums' and to appropriate their entire time and energy till he is weary of them—or till a new one comes to his knowledge—then it is his pitiless habit to 'expose' them and throw them into the street. He is the worst possible man for your daughter to know, and to be in his house is a misfortune."

"How does she happen to be there?"

"Clarke took them there. He was eager to secure Pratt's endorsement of your daughter, and also of the book he is about to publish. Your daughter hates Pratt, and is very anxious to leave, but is afraid to do so for fear of him and of her 'controls.' Pratt has threatened to denounce her if she leaves him."

"Is he in love with her?"

"I don't think so—not in the way you mean. He is bound up in her powers, and would do anything to keep her. But she must be taken away at once and Clarke's oration stopped. I would have interfered, but I had no authority to act. Your wife is satisfied to remain, and the 'chief control,' her father, insists upon their remaining, and Clarke told me last night that your daughter was his affianced wife. You can

see how helpless I am, even though your daughter in her normal mood begged me to save her from madness. I regard her condition as very critical. To expose her to a public trial of her powers may unsettle her reason."

Lambert was profoundly moved by Morton's rapid statement. "What would you advise me to do?"

"Take her away from that house and Clarke's influence instantly, no matter if your wife opposes it."

"Are we on our way there now?"

"Yes, we'll be there in a few minutes. My sister likes your wife and daughter and has invited them to stay with her for a few days. This they have promised to do. I suggest, therefore, that you take them immediately to our home and so get your daughter into a totally different mental atmosphere. This plan will give you time to decide on future action."

"Do they know I'm coming?"

"No, I was afraid you might not come, and—"

"I'm glad you didn't tell them. I wanted to test whether that ghostly grandfather would inform them. I'm mightily obliged to you, professor," he said, after a pause, and his eyes were moist with his emotion. "I never had a child of my own, and I'm fond of Viola. I've always resented this mediumistic business —she's too fine to be spoiled by it—but she wasn't mine, and Julia was so wrapped up in the faith I couldn't stop it. Then Clarke came, and Julia minded what I said no more than if I'd been a chipmunk. So I climbed into the hills and stayed there."

"You believe in your daughter's powers?"

"In her powers, yes; but not in every voice that speaks through her. Have you attended any of her sittings?"

"We had one in my house last night. I laid the burden of the performance to Clarke. He was the juggler."

"Oh no, you're wrong there. I have cause enough to hate Clarke, but he's honest. No, the power is all in Viola. I've had those things go on with nobody but Julia and the girl in the room. No, Clarke is a crazy fool in some ways, but he don't cheat."

His words were so direct, so weighted with conviction, that their force staggered Serviss, causing him to doubt his new explanation. Tolman's generalizations ceased at the moment to convince.

Lambert went on. "I suppose she *is* committed to him. She wrote me that she guessed she might as well; so long as she was a medium nobody else would ever want her—or something like that. I feel guilty, I'll admit, but you see how it was. The girl belongs to Julia, and since Clarke came into the family our correspondence has been pretty well confined to checks on my part and receipts on hers; but she's had plenty of money, professor. There wasn't any need of her going into anybody's house. She could have gone to the best hotels—"

"I don't see how you could have acted differently," said Serviss, with intent to comfort. "But I am sure that Viola"—he spoke the name with a little hesitation—"will eagerly go with you now. She be-

gins to doubt Clarke and to realize the fearful mental peril in which she stands."

"That's what I don't understand, professor. This spiritualistic faith is mighty pretty on the face of it, but it seems to unhinge people's minds. I've known two or three to go 'locoed' with it; that's what kept me from interfering. It isn't for miners to monkey with; but I was in hopes that you would go into it. In fact, I was in hopes you'd got sort o' interested in Viola, and she in you, and that you'd help her someway."

"I am interested in her," replied Serviss, quickly, "and I want to help her; but so long as she is where she is, and acknowledges Clarke's claims, I can do nothing.—Here we are!"

As they drew up before the looming front of Pratt's house the miner whistled. "Must be one of those Wall Street pirates we read about. Nothing spirit-like about this castle, eh?"

"Nor about its lord."

"Why, this beats the Palace Hotel in Salina," he continued, his wonder increasing, then he smiled. "What 'll you bet I don't catch the 'guides' napping! You send up word you're here and leave me out o' sight somewhere. I'd like to show Julia that her daddy don't know all that blows over the roof."

Again Serviss doubted the husband's ability to dominate the forces in opposition—so small and inoffensive did he seem and so ill-timed was his joke.

The colored man, more funereally dignified than before, showed them into the reception-room. "I'm

afraid the ladies are out, sir, but if you'll wait a moment I'll see."

"Be sure Mrs. Lambert gets my card," said Serviss, with a note of warning in his voice. After the man left the room he turned to Lambert. "Pratt has a habit of intercepting the cards of visitors, and deciding who shall and who shall not see your daughter. He hates me and may order me out of the house." As they listened, the master's deep grumbling vibrated through the ceiling. "You see! my card has gone to him, not to your wife. The old ruffian is probably giving instructions to have me shown the door."

To this Lambert made no reply other than to say: "We'll soon know, the nigger is returning."

Some shade of the master's mood was reflected in the voice of the servant, as he said: "The ladies are out and Mr. Pratt is engaged." He had the air of waiting for them to go.

"Out, are they?" remarked Lambert, casually. "Then we'll wait till they come in. When did you say they'll return?"

"I didn't say, sir; probably not till very late."

"Is Clarke in?"

"I don't know, sir. I think not."

"But your boss is in?"

The man hesitated. "Yes, sir; but I told you he's engaged."

Lambert changed his tone. "Now, see here, Charley, you go right back and tell him that Joe Lambert, of

Fremont Basin, is here on business, and would like to have a word with him if he don't mind."

The colored man saw a light, and visibly weakened. "I—I'll tell him," he stammered, and retired.

Lambert followed him to the door and called after him, in a clear tone: "You tell him to come down or I'll go up. Now mind you say just those words."

Morton smiled with joy in Lambert's decisive utterance. "So much for having authority, as well as the will to act!"

Pratt appeared at the head of the stairs. "What is it now, Jenkins?"

"The gentleman insists on seeing you, sir; it's Mr. Lambert."

"Stay where you are," commanded Pratt, "I'll come down and see what's wanted."

Lambert, with quiet, upturned face, watched the master of the house descend slowly step by step, and Morton, contrasting the two men, awaited the collision with rising apprehension. The Western man seemed so small, so inoffensive in manner, in contrast with the grizzled, insolent face of the sullen old man approaching with heavy jaw set at a bull-dog angle. "Well, sir, what is it?" he contemptuously inquired.

Lambert waited so long that his questioner began to wonder, and then remarked, quietly: "So you're Pratt!"

"I am."

"Well, I'm Joe Lambert, of Fremont, and I've come to relieve you of the keep of my wife and daughter."

Nothing could have been more telling, more admirable, than his tone. Every word told, and as Pratt stood in a daze of surprise Lambert turned to the servant. "Now, George, you try again. You tell Mrs. Lambert her husband wants to see her, and you may ask Clarke to come along. I want a word or two with him."

"Wait!" called Pratt. "I want to know—"

Lambert pointed a finger like a pistol. "You *go!*" and the man went. The Westerner then turned to the owner of the house and said: "Out where I live a husband has some rights which he can enforce if he is minded to do so. I haven't looked after my family as closely as I might, but I'm going to do better hereafter. I believe my wife and daughter are in this house, and I intend to see them, and your wishes don't count in the matter. I'd advise you not to interfere."

Pratt began to retreat. "I didn't know—"

"But suppose you didn't—what right have you to supervise my wife's affairs? Why didn't you send Professor Serviss's card to her? What business had you to say she was out?"

Pratt came down from his lofty pose. "So many strangers insist on seeing the psychic—"

"But Professor Serviss is not a stranger, and, furthermore, unless my wife's mind has weakened, she's quite competent to turn down any one she don't want to see. I can't understand why she is here, but I intend to find out. So long as she bears my name I don't want her to be under any obligation to a man of your stamp."

There was power and a quiet dignity in the little man, and Pratt began to plead his case. "I've tried to make it comfortable for them, and help on their work—"

Lambert looked up and down the splendid hall, and in a softer tone replied: "So far I'm in your debt, but I don't like it. I am able to provide for my family and I don't intend to share their supervision with you nor any other man. So far as I know, my wife still considers me the head of the family—anyhow, that's what I'm here to find out."

Mrs. Lambert appeared at the head of the stairs and called, in a tremulous voice: "Is that you, Joe?"

"It is, Julia. Come down."

Viola, with a cry of joy, left her mother's side and running down the steps, flung herself into Lambert's arms like a frightened child. "Oh, Papa-Joe—I'm so glad to see you!"

Lambert was astonished by the warmth of her greeting, and while she hid her face on his shoulder patted her awkwardly with soothing words of endearment until at last she lifted her pale and tear-wet face and whispered:

"Oh, it's been a terrible day — take me away, quick!"

Lambert looked up at his wife. "Julia, what's been going on here? You both look like the dead."

Mrs. Lambert's face was wrinkled and haggard and wan like that of one grown suddenly old, and Morton was aware that her serenity was utterly gone before

she spoke. Her voice was weak and piteous. "I thought it was all for the best, Joe. I followed the 'guides'—"

"Follow them a little longer and you'll all land in the mad-house," he replied. Then to Viola he tenderly said: "Don't you worry any more, girlie. Old Papa-Joe's going to take you home."

Serviss spoke. "You're to come to us to-night. Kate expects you both."

At the sound of his voice Viola turned with an impulsive reaching of the hands. "Oh, Dr. Serviss, that would be heavenly! I love your sister and her beautiful home."

Lambert issued his command. "Get your outfits together. I don't understand how you got here, but you're going to get out with me within the next half-hour."

Viola's spirit rose like flame. "We're all ready—this moment. I sent our trunks away this morning. They went to the West Park. I'll be down instantly," and she turned to run up the stairs, just as Clarke appeared at their head. His face was white and wild and his voice hoarse with fear and reproach as he intercepted her.

"What has happened? Who is below?"

"My step-father," she answered, curtly, and fled away to her room.

Mrs. Lambert was about to follow when she saw Clarke descending, and drew back with a look of appeal at her husband. It was evident to Serviss

that her confidence in Clarke had given place to fear.

During all this time Pratt had been standing meditatively swaying to and fro on his feet, chewing upon something which he held far back in his cheek. He resembled a sullen, chained, and vindictive elephant meditating murder. He watched Clarke descend the stairs with very little change of expression; but Lambert's face darkened as the minister called out:

"What are you going to do?"

"That does not concern you," he replied, and his voice cut. "Your control of my household stops right here! Julia, go get your things." He laid an imperative hand on Clarke's arm. "Clear the way for her!"

With a look of alarm Mrs. Lambert started to follow her daughter. "Don't be harsh, Joe." Then to Clarke she said, pleadingly: "It's best, Anthony, for a little while. Viola is so nervous and morbid."

"I know what it means," he passionately answered. "It means the wreck of all my hopes. It means ruin to all my plans—"

Lambert again interfered. "Julia! get dressed. I will attend to Mr. Clarke." As she hurried up the stairs he turned to Morton in apology. "I've been to blame for this separation. I should have asserted my rights before. No man has the right to shirk his family duty. My duty was to look after the welfare of my wife and daughter, and now see their faces! This year has made Julia an old woman." His voice

choked. When he could speak he addressed himself to Clarke. "You promised me that you wouldn't use the girl's name in any way, and yet I'm told you're about to publish it broadcast."

"The control consents—"

Here Lambert's wrath broke bonds. "Damn the control! I don't consent. And I serve notice on you, and on you too"—he directed a menacing look upon Pratt—"to respect the name of my wife as well as that of my daughter. Clarke has lived long enough in the West to know what I mean, but I'll explain to you." He faced Pratt, and with easy, almost gentle utterance, continued: "I've spent some thirty-five years on the border, where a man is called upon now and then to serve as his own judge, jury, and hangman. Perhaps we're a little prone to take matters into our own hands; but be that as it may, the professor here has posted me about you and your ways, and I merely want to state, once for all, that if you utter one word public or private against my wife or daughter I'll kill you as I would a wolf."

The slow pulsing flow of the miner's voice, the absence of all oaths or justifying gesture, froze Pratt into immobility and thrilled Serviss with joy, for he, too, perceived that every word came from the heart of a very determined and very dangerous man.

Clarke started forward. "You wrong me! Everything I have done has been for their good—for the good of the world."

Lambert stopped him with a gesture. "Right here

you quit, my friend. I don't question your good intentions, but I'm sick of the whole crazy business, and so is Julia. Why, good God, man! she looks ten years older since she left the valley. You've been nothing but a curse to her and the girl from the very start, and here is where your trail forks."

The preacher's hollow cheeks were ashen gray and his throat thick with passion as he cried: "You can't do that! You must not separate us. I love her—she is mine! The spirit forces have promised her to me. They will resent your interference, they will over-ride your puny opposition."

"I take the consequences. They go and you stay!"

Clarke turned to Morton in a frenzy, his eyes flaming, his lips dry and contorted. "I see your hand in this! You stand there silent, but you are the machinator of this plot. You are stealing her away—"

"Be quiet!" commanded Morton, with a gesture towards the stairway. "Don't you see them coming?"

Viola, fully dressed, and breathless with eagerness to flee, was hurriedly descending.

As she neared him, Clarke cried out, with lamentable, despairing wail: "Viola, you are leaving me!"

She gave him one awed, pitying backward glance and passed on, hurrying as if to escape his outspread hand, swift to outrun the inevitable tragic shadow of his faith.

For an instant he reeled back against the wall,

then sprang to follow, but the young scientist intervened and thrust him back.

"Keep to your own trail," he sternly said, and as he opened the door for the girl, she seemed to pass at once into the sunlit spring-time world of common life.

XIX

SERVISS ASSUMES CONTROL

AT the carriage-door Mrs. Lambert halted, her heart sorely smitten by the vision of Clarke's agonized face. "Wait a moment!" she cried out. "We were too cruel. Let me say good-bye."

"No," Lambert replied, firmly "You are done with him." And with these words he gently assisted her into the coach. "Get in, professor," he added, with a touch of the same command. "We must be moving."

With a succinct phrase of direction to the driver, Serviss complied, taking the front seat, opposite Viola. He was horrified to find her shaking violently as if with cold, her face white, her eyes big and wild. Her physical rescue was accomplished, but it was immediately made plain to him that the invisible bonds which linked her to Clarke were being drawn upon with merciless power, for with the first motion of the vehicle she fixed a look of terror and entreaty upon her mother, exclaiming, huskily: "They are calling me! They will not let me go."

Lambert stared in helpless dismay as he realized the force of this inner struggle; but the young scientist,

filled with fierce rage at this assertion of the dark forces, met them promptly in pride of his own resources, his own desire.

"Give me your hands!" he commanded, sharply. She obeyed like a child in a stupor of pain, her breath coming through her pallid lips with a hissing sound as if she were sinking each moment deeper into an icy flood.

With both her inert hands in his, with love and mastering will in his eyes, he bent a deep, piercing gaze upon her with intent to rouse her and sustain her. "You must not give way. You are too strong, too brave, to yield to this delusion. You are clear of it all now—entering upon a free and happy life. . . . Think of the new conditions into which you are going. . . . Kate is waiting you. No one can control you if you set your will sharply against it. . . . Remember the Marshall Basin and the splendid sunshine. . . . You are leaving all hateful, evil influences behind." In this way he labored to fill her mind with new conceptions, building up in her a will to resist, and as he felt the tremor die out of her hands and saw the color coming back into her face he smiled with a sense of victory. "You see!" he resumed, in triumph. "You are better. Your hands are warmer. You are breathing naturally again. Your enemies are being left behind."

It was true. The hunted, piteous look had left her eyes. She seemed drowsy, but it was the languor of relief. The vital force, the sanity, the imperious appeal of the man before her had rolled back the cloud

of fear which had all but closed over her head. He released her hands, saying: "We must have no more backward glances. Remember Lot's wife."

Lambert, filled with satisfaction, laid a silencing hand upon his wife's arm. His faith in science, in the force of exact learning, was being met, and he was resolved to leave the hypnotist free to act, to control.

Roused and confident, the young scientist continued his appeal, leaving her no time to dwell upon the past. "You are young," he said in effect, "and it is spring. You are false to yourself if you permit yourself to lose through any such morbid imagining a single hour of joy. All depends on your own will, your own desire to be free. Henceforth you are never to be sad or afraid. I will you to be happy and you must obey."

She rose from the deep of her depression as a lily rises from the sod after the trampling storm-wind has passed. Her response to his call filled him with hope as well as with astonishment. It was as if he had torn from her throat the hands of some hideous beast, half-man, half-devil, and they entered Kate's home in such normal, cheerful relationship that no one could possibly have associated any hidden grief with either of them, not even with Mrs. Lambert, and Viola met her hostess with the gay spirits of an unexpected but confident guest.

Kate was both amazed and delighted by their sudden irruption, and being eager to know all the details of their escape from the Pratt stronghold hurried Viola

and her mother away to their rooms, leaving Lambert in Morton's care.

"Well, professor," said the miner, when they were alone, "we made the break and won out. I reckon they're side-tracked now."

"Yes, and I hope we are done with both Pratt and Clarke; but they'll both bear watching. Pratt I especially fear."

"He's had his notice," Lambert grimly replied. "As for Clarke, it looks as though even Julia had got enough of him. He looked like a man on the road to the mad-house, and I reckon she's convinced of it now."

"I pitied him, but I do not feel that you are in any sense indebted to him. On the contrary, a large part of your daughter's slavery to the trance is due to his pernicious influence."

"You must be something of an influence yourself, professor. It was wonderful the way you brought her out of that trance. I never saw that done before. I reckon you must have some kind of mesmerism about you."

"Not a particle more than you have. However, I should like to believe in my power to help her. In fact, I do believe that. It is really a question of her own will. The old idea of some subtle physical force or fluid passing from the operator to the subject is no longer held. It is not even necessary to make passes nor to put the subject in a trance. All we need to do is suggest to her that no one, not even her ghostly grandfather, can control her against her will. We must

keep her mind full of bright and cheerful thoughts, and convince her that by leaving the Pratt house she has attained freedom."

"I will do what I can," said Lambert; "but I've seen her taken down so many times, I'm a little doubtful. She's in a bad way, I admit. It has its bad side as well as its pretty side, this religion. It unhinges a lot of people, and I reckon Clarke's a little off or he wouldn't have got my folks into that mess."

"Don't let Viola feel your doubt; present a confident face to her. There is nothing supernatural in the world, nothing lying outside of nature or outside of law. Many diseases which were once considered demoniacal possessions we now know to be quite as natural as any other in fact. Disease is only health gone wrong; and the mental disorder in which Viola now stands is certainly curable if we proceed properly and with confidence."

"I like to have you say these things, professor. They kind o' fit in with what I've thought over all by myself out there in the mountains. I like the man who says 'such and such a thing is so-and-so, because I can prove it.' That's what science is, I take it. There's altogether too much guess-work about this spiritualistic religion—it needs some engineer like you to get down to the bed-rock. Clarke is the kind of man who thinks he's on the vein when he ain't."

"I'm giving it a good deal of thought, and may be I will some day take up the experimentation—but not with your daughter as a subject. However, we'll

discuss that later. You are tired and I'll show you your room and bath, and after you freshen up a bit we'll discuss our next movement."

Lambert turned as he entered the room assigned to him, and said, with deep feeling: "I'm trusting in you, professor. I'm out o' my latitude in this spirit enterprise. As I say, I've neglected my family since Clarke came into it, and it was all wrong. I should have asserted my rights. I don't blame Julia as much as I did. Women are kind o' weak in some ways—more religious, you may say—and Clarke got hold of Julia in a way that I couldn't understand. I didn't mind her thinking more of Waldron than of me—that's natural, we all have our first loves—but I couldn't stand Clarke's overbearing ways in my own house." His voice grew firm. "Well, now, here I am with time and money. Tell me what to do and I'll do it."

Morton's liking for the Western man was raised almost to affection, as he looked into his earnest, remorseful eyes and listened to his low-toned confession. "You may depend on my help," he responded, heartily, extending his hand in token. "Your step-daughter interests me deeply. There is something for you to do, but I will not ask it now."

"Yes, tell me, so I can be thinking it over."

Morton pondered a moment, then said: "I had a consultation to-day with a great nerve specialist, a man who uses hypnotism, or 'suggestion,' as he calls it, in his practice. He is perfectly sure that your daughter can be restored to mental health, but she

must have a complete change of companionship and environment. He agrees with me that she must be separated not merely from Pratt and Clarke, but from her mother also. I need your help in this."

"That will be hard on Julia," Lambert slowly responded. "She hasn't much else but the girl and her religion." He looked down at the floor. "Yes, that is a rough sentence, professor, but I shouldn't wonder if you were right."

"It must be done, Lambert; and the very best service you can render is to take your wife and go home, leaving Viola here in our care— But that can wait till after you are rested." And with this final word he closed the door and returned to his library to await Kate's return and her inevitable demand for the story of what had taken place.

He took up one of the most recent books treating of Suggestion, and resumed consideration of a paragraph which had arrested him as if a hand had been placed upon his shoulder. "Suggestion does not limit or depress the subconscious self, it sets it free, exalts its powers, making it not something less, but something vastly more than the normal and the conscious self."

Could it be possible that Viola, in common with hundreds of other apparently well-authenticated cases, possessed the "psychic force" which Maxwell, Richet, and Lombroso recognized? The hypothesis, difficult as it was, profoundly inexplicable from every point of view, was, after all, less of a wrench to the reason,

came closer to the frame of his philosophy than the claims of Crookes and Wallace. To accept the spiritist faith even as a "working hypothesis" was impossible to his definite type of mind.

If these raps, movements, voices, could be related to the working of the subconscious mind, or, as Myers called it, the "subliminal self," then the power of the hypnotist might be able to control their order and to a certain extent their character. They were not signs of a diseased brain (according to Myers again), but were the manifestations of a power scattered here and there among men, without system, without known law. Maxwell agreeing with this, ends by saying: "These mysterious phenomena are due, therefore, neither to spirits nor disease, but to a perfectly natural force lying within the minds of the sitters and exercised by the psychic."

He had already derived much hope from the monumental work of Myers and his school. Hundreds of cases of hallucinations, alternating personality, hysterio-epilepsy, and other kindred apparent abnormalities, had been studied by means of hypnotism, and certain processes inhibited or set going at the will of an operator. The latest word of these masters was most heartening. They had demonstrated that the trance was no longer a necessary part of hypnotism. That the subject would not follow out in trance any improper or criminal suggestion which he would not do in conscious state; and, "There is no great physical difference between the normal and the hypnotic state," he read; "the real

mental difference lies in the temporary removal of motives tending to counteract the suggestion, and this removal does not imply an inhibition of faculty, but an actual extension or liberation of faculty."

In fine, these men agreed that the mind, reaching back, by its very structure, to the beginning of organic life, was limited by consciousness to a comparatively small number of its potentialities, whereas its subliminal life (on the contrary) was infinite and unsearchably subtle. All minds partook, in varying degrees, of these baffling powers, but only now and then, through unusual favoring circumstances, was the brain able to manifest its depth and subtlety. Sickness, sleeplessness, physical shock, some accidental series of events now and then permitted a display of these hidden acquirements, and thereafter the individual was marked as abnormal, possessed, according to the ancient view, by angels or devils.

Others still, by putting themselves deliberately into the study, had been able to subordinate the conscious mind, little by little liberating their subliminal forces by practice, attaining thus almost miraculous powers. In this way the "medium" became clairvoyant, clairaudient, telekinetic. In other cases still, as in Viola's case, this subordination of the supra-liminal self had been accomplished by the suggestion of others, by submission to the will of others.

He had been profoundly instructed by Tolman's account of a case of alternating personality which he had studied with so much care. The fact that the

secondary self appeared when the subject's life seemed at a lower ebb, and when the cerebral centres were sparsely supplied with the life-current, and the further fact that the use of a certain substance which stimulated (without poisoning) the higher brain-centres, was able to bring back the primary or supra-liminal self, was of the utmost value. It threw a flood of light upon Viola's condition, for had she not in her trance become inert, cold, and almost without pulse? He had provided himself with this drug, and as he studied its appearance in the phial, so minute, so colorless, so helpless in its prison, he felt once again the mystery of matter, and smiled to think how childish was the popular conception of the physical universe as something dead and inorganic. Nothing is more mysterious.

"The office of this drug can be twofold. It has the power in itself to flush the cerebral centres with fresh blood, and it can also serve as a point of support for the suggestion I am about to give. It does not really matter whether she has any phase of what they call mediumistic power or not. To rid her of her trances will liberate her from a belief in her ills, and that is the main consideration."

He found the greatest encouragement at this point in the many cases where perfect mental health had been restored by means of a complete change of mental stimuli. "All hypnotic methods," he read, "have one thing in common, and that is the diversion of attention from the insistency of external surroundings. . . . The hypnotic state has one broad char-

acteristic, and that is the working of the subliminal consciousness in directions unusual in ordinary life."

"The way to help her is to cut off every suggestion which leads to the trance and to the thought of the dead; to centre her mind on the serene, the busy, the sunny. Thus flooding her brain with sights and sounds utterly disassociated with her past."

The realization that she was at last domesticated under his roof made her redemption seem easy, certain, almost accomplished. There remained only the painful duty of separating her from her mother. He could see that this would bring keen sorrow upon them both, but that if she could be brought to consider him in the light of her future husband, the change would seem less violent; for, after all, it was the law of life which subordinated the claims of the mother to those of the husband.

"At any rate, the issue is now clear in my mind. A powerful chain of suggestion has been formed and fastened upon her by her own mother and by Clarke. That chain must be broken; it is broken in Clarke's case, and no matter what the pain, the fear, this course may cause the mother, it must be pursued in order to restore Viola to health."

He passed from this to a forecast of the radical changes in his own life which an avowal of love would make, and his mood chilled. He had always imagined the announcement of his engagement, falling into a sober and decorous paragraph among the society notes, and had figured himself receiving with

dignified composure the congratulations of his associates and club-fellows. He had never considered the possibility of shrinking from these publicities, nor fancied himself in the light of finding excuses to justify or explain his marriage. He now clearly foresaw, foreheard the comment, the surprise, the opposition of his family.

He pulled himself up short with a word of derision at the length to which he had permitted his mind to run. "All this for the future. The immediate question is, Can she be freed from her bonds?"

He was deep in his book when Kate entered with excited greeting. "Morton, do you know that those women have been locked in their rooms all day for fear of Clarke and Pratt? Well, they were! Clarke has gone stark mad with jealousy, and even that besotted mother was afraid of him, and admits it. They would be there in that house prisoners this minute only for you."

"Don't lay your wreath on my head; keep it for Lambert. Really, Kate, he was magnificent. Little as he is, he towered. I had no doubt of his willingness and ability to kill either Pratt or Clarke; and I don't think they questioned the integrity of his promise."

Kate's mind took a new turn. "She's broken with Clarke, thank Heaven! But the mother clings to him in spite of all."

"I am about to suggest to Mrs. Lambert that she go West with her husband, leaving the girl in your care for a little while."

"I wish they would!"

"She must be freed from even her mother's presence for a while—that is, if they really want to have her cured of her trances."

"I see," said Kate, thoughtfully. "The mother is so closely associated with all that tapping."

"Precisely. I wish, when Mrs. Lambert is rested, you would ask her to let me see her here. I want to talk these matters over with her in private."

"They're both lying down, but I'll tell her when she rises. Don't do anything rash," she added, with a reaction towards caution which amused him.

"You may trust me."

She came back a few steps, and hesitatingly said. "For, after all, Morton, the girl *is* abnormal."

"So are we all—under abnormal conditions. I am going to see if I can't so change the current of her thought that she will forget her besetments—and you must help me."

"She's shockingly pretty and it will be very dangerous having her beneath your very roof." She gave a warning backward look. "How dare you permit it?"

"I am a very brave man," he replied, with a smile, and an inflection that puzzled her.

XX

THE MOTHER'S FAITH

MRS. LAMBERT entered timidly, her gentle face sadder and its lip-line firmer than he had ever seen it. It was evident that the experiences of the last few days had touched her and shaken her.

Up to this time Morton had considered her as a genial but rather negative personality, a soul naturally subordinate to others, but she now rose to an importance in his life which made her real self of the highest significance. His first glance was one of sincerest admiration. Doubtless she had once been as slender and quite as tall as her daughter, and though increasing age and weight had combined to rob her of height and grace, she was, nevertheless, still a distinctly commanding figure. Her head was nobly fashioned, her eyes a candid blue, and her glance clear and unworn in its appeal.

Altogether he could not but acknowledge in her a mother of which no man need be ashamed, and in this spirit he met her and invited her to a seat. "Mr. Lambert and I have been talking of the mountains to-day," he began. "I wish we were on our way out there this moment, for I am tired of the city."

She brightened under his smile. "I wouldn't mind going home at once, but I know Viola would be disappointed. She has seen so little of the city, and then Mr. Clarke—" She broke off in some confusion as if in sudden recollection of the chasm which had opened between the young clergyman and her daughter.

He seized upon this allusion to say: "I did not think of including Mr. Clarke, Mrs. Lambert. I think you and your daughter have both had too much of him. I do not doubt his sincerity, but I am quite certain that he was leading you both into an abyss. I hope you will make the most of this chance to free yourself from his influence. I quite stand with your husband in that resolution."

Her face grew cold again. "As to that, I must wait for further illumination. These last few hours have been so disturbed we are quite cut off from our guides."

"You depend upon them—they are very real to you, are they not?" He spoke musingly.

"They are just as real to me as you are—or any one."

"Did you not doubt their wisdom to-day?"

She drew herself up. "Why should I?"

"They knew nothing of your husband's coming?"

"Oh yes, they did, only they couldn't communicate on account of Viola's mental condition." Then, with unshakable conviction, she added: "If I doubted them I should doubt everything."

"I am sorry to trouble you. I am not one to need-

lessly destroy a comforting faith, and yet I confess I thought the time had come to invoke your husband's aid. It was in that spirit I sent the telegram."

"I am very glad you did, although I had no fear. I knew my father would find the right way when the time came. Let me tell you, sir," she replied, expanding in the warmth of his interest. "Before these revelations came to me I had no real faith in God or heaven. The world beyond the grave was dark and cold. It seemed to me as if my little boy and my husband were in the cruel, wet ground. I couldn't feel that they had gone to Christ. But now the tomb is but a portal to the light. The spirit-plane is as real as the earth-plane, and filled with joyous souls. I can hear them sing sometimes when I hold Viola's hand, and the sound is very beautiful and very comforting."

"I can understand that," he answered, but quietly, critically, still studying her face. "It has a warmer charm than any other religion I know."

She went on, eagerly: "I wish you could come to believe. Your sister said your mother and your uncle spoke last night. Why can't you accept the faith?"

The young philosopher gained, as she spoke, a new conception of her character, and chilled with a growing sense of the difficult and ungracious task which lay before him. He began to perceive that her awe of him had kept her silent, thus concealing from him the spirit of the evangelist which he now saw she possessed. She counted more largely in Viola's develop-

ment than he had hitherto granted. Her faith was solidly based on years of experience and was not to be easily moved. As she went on he perceived that her daughter's mediumship was much more than a theory in her thought; it was a fact, and a daily, almost an hourly, necessity. He lost his last suspicion of her, and caught a glimpse of the larger aspect of her relationship to his future. She was deceived, of course, but she was honest in every fibre. He could not accuse her of the slightest deceit or falsification.

In her lame way she tried to argue the question, quoting the platitudes of the "inspirational speakers," as well as the pompous phrases of her spirit-father, while he listened courteously.

When she paused, he said, gravely: "My dear Mrs. Lambert, I can't leave you in any doubt of my position. I cannot for a single instant accept what happened last night as the manifestation of the disembodied. I cannot think that the phenomena exist. I must rather think they were performed by Clarke, or my sister, or Weissmann, in joke." She looked at him with an expression of horror, of incredulity, and he went on, quickly: "Even if I admitted the fact of direct writing or the movement of the horn, I should not by any means be driven to accept your spirit-hypothesis. There are men, and very great investigators, who would say that your daughter's trances and all phenomena connected therewith were pathologic, explainable on the grounds of some obscure neural derangement. I do not say this is the

case, but I do say that if she persists in these practices she will lose control of her mental faculties. I have had a consultation to-day with Dr. Tolman, a man who makes a specialty of such cases, and when I had laid the whole matter before him, he and Dr. Weissmann both advised the immediate stopping of these trances."

"We can't do that. They come from the other side. My father induces the trance, and it is entirely in his hands."

He fixed a keen look upon her. "Did it ever occur to you that the words of your 'guides' were, in reality, but a reflex of the wishes of Pratt or Clarke?"

"How could that be when they came to me long before I even knew Anthony?"

"But was not the advice of a different quality at that time? Maybe your father yields to the will of living people when they are strong enough."

"Oh no, quite the contrary. He opposes Mr. Clarke often. Sometimes he opposes us all."

"I am perfectly sure that the voices that spoke to us last night were a subtle delusion, an emanation from our own bodies—or the work of a joker. My reason repels them as spirits."

She smiled a little. "I think you scientific people go a long way round to explain a very simple thing. I've read some of the explanations of the way in which you think these phenomena come, but they are harder to understand than the thing itself. My father, my husband, and my little son are alive. I know that. No one can destroy that faith in me."

"I do not wish to destroy that faith—only so far as it seems to threaten your daughter."

"I am perfectly sure they know better what we should do than any one on the earth-plane. I cannot see why you people oppose the idea of the spirit-world when it is so beautiful and could fill the world with hope. The Bible teaches it when you read it right. It is full of references to spirits. Did not Christ rise from the dead and manifest to His disciples?"

"And did He not cast out devils?"

She was momentarily at a loss, but soon recovered. "But if you admit there are *evil* spirits—"

"But I don't. I said that merely to show you that a sceptic can quote Scripture to his purpose. There is no place in my philosophy for the supernatural."

"That is what we believe," she eagerly responded. "I used to be frightened by the things that happened to Viola, but now I know they are natural, just as natural as anything else. My loved ones are not far away, they are very near, but, oh, so intangible. If I could only touch them!" In this was the cry of her soul. She deeply sighed. "I am growing old, and that means I live in the past more and more. When Waltie comes I can imagine myself as I was when we first went to the mountains. Robert means more and more to me, and all fear of 'the change' is gone. Really, if it were not for Viola I would like to go over to the other side to-night. The spirit-plane seems so much more care-free and bright. This life is but a preparatory school at best."

"That is all wrong," he decisively replied. "Very wrong. Even if your idea of the other world were right, you should not abandon your hold on this till your work was done. A general condition of mind like yours would stop all invention, all discovery, and especially all philanthropy. In fact, the only philanthropy would be murder. To end man's suffering here would be a duty. War would be a blessing, and disease a rescue. No, no. You must not talk like that."

"Oh, I'm not really thinking of going. I feel that I must stay a little while longer to see Viola settled in life."

"What do you mean by that? Do you mean married, and happy, or do you mean given over entirely to the trance?"

"I suppose she ought to marry—she is very unhappy as she is."

"Now, that is what I especially wanted to talk with you about. I have decided to ask your daughter to put herself into my hands, and I hope you will give your consent."

"I shall be glad to have you take charge of her, professor, and father, I know, is anxious to have you head the committee."

"Oh, I don't mean that! I mean something much more intimate, much more important." This brought him face to face with himself and the decision over which he had agonized for so long, and for an instant he hesitated, then took the plunge bravely. "I love

your daughter, Mrs. Lambert, and I want your permission to tell her so."

She drew back into her chair with a gasp of surprise and a look of alarm.

"Oh, I didn't understand! I thought you meant—I don't know—I—" She was utterly at a loss for words, but he understood her.

"Your hesitation is not flattering to me. I hope you don't absolutely distrust me."

Her embarrassment was pitiful. "Oh no, indeed! But you are a sceptic. You don't believe in us—in her."

"Oh yes, I do!"

"And, besides, she has been promised for two years to Tony—Mr. Clarke."

He grew a little hard at mention of the preacher's name. "But she fears and hates Clarke. She has broken with him. She told my sister that she was done with him forever. You will not ask her to marry a man she distrusts?"

She flew to Clarke's defence. "That was only a mood, a lover's quarrel. He was all upset by Pratt and—and other things. I will not allow her to desert him when he is in trouble. He has been so much to us, and he is a noble character in spite of all."

"All this is very disturbing to me," he answered, more humorously than he felt. "But, nevertheless, I also claim to be a noble character."

She began once more to realize his place in the world and his kindness to Viola. "I know that, pro-

fessor. I fully recognize the honor you do her and me, but she is not like other girls. She is set aside to do God's work, and ought not to marry at all. That is why the 'guides' have given her to Anthony; he, too, is consecrated."

"Dear Mrs. Lambert, you shock me when you say such things. I don't believe it is your daughter's duty to convert people to a belief in immortality. I don't believe in teaching men and women to depend upon an unseen world for guidance; and especially do I despise any faith which makes this life less important than some other just beyond. I love this life, and do not intend to trouble myself about what lies beyond the grave. That is really not my concern. To regard this world as a vale of tears leading to a shining heaven is a species of mediævalism from which I revolt."

She caught this up. "That is just the reason why Viola would be unhappy with a sceptic."

"But I am not a sceptic. I have the greatest faith. I am certain I can make her happy here and now. You surely would not permit her to go back to Anthony Clarke!"

She was troubled and confused. "I don't know. Perhaps it would be best, after all. A great deal of her 'power' comes from him." She brightened. "But I will leave all that to father."

Again he leaned to her with tender gravity. "You must not do that. Unless you deny the value of all life here on the earth, you are an unnatural mother

to devote your child to such a career as Clarke holds out to her. I love your daughter because she is a beautiful girl, a charming personality, and I am able to give her security and comfort. I will be perfectly frank with you. I think these trances have been fastened upon her by those about her, and if she consents to come to me I shall stop them forever. My aim will be to delude her into thinking life with me of more value than the highest eminence as a 'medium.' Now, if this seems treason to you, I cannot soften it. I want you to fully understand my position. My schooling has been all in the exact sciences, and what skill I possess I am using to make the world a healthier and happier place to live in. Your way of life (and Clarke's philosophy of life) seems to me weak and morbid, and your treatment of your daughter mistakenly cruel. I intend to take her out of it, if I can. And, furthermore, dear lady, if you withhold your consent, which I profoundly hope you will not, I must proceed without it. If she comes to me, she ceases to be a psychic. If I can prevent it, she will never sit again."

The mother sat as if stunned by the weight of his will, the rush of his words, the decision of his glance. She fully understood the situation. She knew that Viola already leaned upon and trusted this man more than any other being in the world, and knowing this she felt the full force of the tragic situation. It was not a question of a temporary separation, that she foresaw as by some prophetic vision. Her baby, her

clinging, loving girl-child was about to pass from her arms forever, carrying with her all interest in life and all means of communication with her dead. With her she was about to lose husband, son—and all the blessed music of the happy multitudes of those on the spirit-plane. It was as if the shining portals to the world of light were about to be closed to her forever, closed and barred by the hand of this implacable young lover, and with a sudden, most lamentable cry she sobbed forth: "Oh, I can't consent! I can't bear to think of it!"

The sight of that placid, motherly face breaking into lines of anguish while the gray old head bowed in weakness, completely unmanned the self-centred young scientist, and bending above her, he tenderly pleaded.

"Dear Mrs. Lambert, you wring my heart with your weeping. Don't cry, I beg of you! I didn't intend to be harsh. I only intended to be honest with you. I wish you would trust me. Let me be a son to you. Even if Viola does not care for me as I hope she does, I can help you, and even if she consents to my treatment, the separation will only be for a few months or a year."

"You would take my hope from me. You would rob me!" She challenged him with white and distorted face. "You are hard and cruel, and I will not give her up. I know her nature. She is necessary to the spirit-world and you have no right to destroy her power."

"I am sorry if I seemed to attack your faith. It has many beautiful things inwoven with its morbidities. I would believe it if I could, but I can't, and in my present state of mind I can only repeat that, however painful it may be to you, I see no other way to save your daughter from insanity. Yes, my dear Mrs. Lambert, the case is quite as desperate as that, to my thinking, and as I am beginning to centre my life in her also, you will see that I am quite as deeply concerned as any one. She has reached a danger-point. She must not go on in this way another month."

Again those lines of serene obstinacy came back into her face, and the gentle bigot looked from her eyes. "You are all wrong. These trances are as natural as sleep. They rest her, do her good—father says so. He treats her from that side and is watching over her. I admire you, Professor Serviss, I appreciate the honor you do me, but I cannot consent to have Viola go from me. I can't endure the thought. If you believed in the spirit-world and the guides consented, I would be glad; but you don't. You hate everything concerning our faith, and I am afraid of you. I wish my girl had never seen you." She rose in a panic of growing alarm. "Let me go to her!"

He detained her gently. "Just a moment. Remember I have not said a word of all this to her, and your alarm may be quite groundless. What do you fear if your 'guides' are so wise and powerful? Where is your proselyting zeal? Am I not worthy of being

converted? Why not let Viola influence me towards your path?"

She sank back into her chair bewildered by his tone, and he went on: "You considered Mr. Clarke a most important instrument for spreading the light, but I am egotistic enough to say that my conversion would mean more to your cause than fifty Clarkes. You forget also that your father was very anxious to have me brought into the circle. You recall that?"

She faintly answered, "Yes."

"Well, then, let that count in my favor. You call me a sceptic, but I am really a slave to evidence. I will go wherever the evidence leads. I have no proof of the spirit-world, but I am of open mind. Can you ask any more of me than that? I have said that I intend to end Viola's career as a psychic, if I can; but if I can't, if the manifestations go on in spite of me, I will study them faithfully, glad of any revelation of a new world which they may bring. If you are so clear in your confidence, so certain of your faith, why not consent to let me speak to her?"

She rose again. "I can't do that. I *must* not."

He offered his hand with a smile. "Your lack of confidence in me I forgive, for I think I understand your feeling. Do not be deceived, my suit does not end here. I intend, at the earliest moment, to win your daughter's consent to my plan. There is only one thing I would like you to promise, and that is this: Don't prejudice her against me. Let me speak to her first. Will you promise that?"

She shook her head. "I must tell her, and we must sit for council."

"Well, then, will you promise to let me sit with you? Will you promise to put off that sitting till I can be present? It is only fair to me, as I am quite as vitally affected as any one in the result. Come! Will you promise?"

She bowed her head in sign of consent and hastened towards the door.

He stood aside to let her pass, pitying her because understanding her. "And please don't distress her to-night. Let her live this evening as a joyous girl, undisturbed even by my question."

She went out fear-stricken by the power of his glance, the persuasion of his voice. Her instinct at the moment was to take her child and flee, immuring herself far from those who would rob her of her only remaining interest in the world.

XXI

CLARKE SHADOWS THE FEAST

VIOLA, looking up from a piece of antique jewelry which Kate was displaying, was startled by the sadness of her mother's face, and directed her next glance upon Morton, in the wish to discover the cause of her trouble. That the interview had been very grave and personal was evident, and with a sense of having been the subject of discussion, she rose to meet them.

Kate did not permit any explanations, for dinner was waiting and time limited. "Go fetch Mr. Lambert, Morton: unless we want to be late at the play we must go out at once."

Morton was glad of the interruption, for he was eager to have his understanding with Viola before the mother could bring any adverse influence to bear upon her. As they went out into the dining-room, side by side, he found her nearness sweeter and more concerning than ever before; and with a realization of having in a very vital way staked his immediate future upon her word, he was unusually gay, masking his persistent, deep-hid doubt in jocose remarks. Lambert seconded him with quiet humor, and together they caused even

the mother's face to relax its troubled lines, while Viola, yielding to a sense of freedom and of youth, shook off all constraint, responding to Morton's unspoken suggestion, thinking only of him and of the secure, bright world in which he dwelt (and in which he seemed so large and so handsome a figure), and in this confidence and comfort they came to the mixing of the salad, which Kate slangily explained to be Morton's "particular stunt." He had fully assembled his ingredients, and was about to approach the actual, delicate blending when the maid appeared at his elbow to say that he was wanted at the telephone.

"Well, tell them to wait," he replied, testily. "This is a very precise moment."

"I told them you were at dinner, sir, but they said it was important."

He rose with a sigh. "I hope my 'whiff of garlic' won't settle into a steady breeze. Be patient a moment, kind people."

With mild wonder as to what the news might be, he took a seat at his desk and put the receiver to his ear.

"Hello. Who is it?"

A hurried, eager, almost breathless boyish voice responded. "Is this Dr. Serviss?"

"It is."

"Can you tell me where Miss Viola Lambert and her mother are?"

"I cannot." By which he meant he was not empowered to do so.

"I was told they left Pratt's house with you sometime this afternoon."

"Have you inquired at the Courtleigh?"

"No. I was so sure—"

"Try either the Courtleigh or the Colorado," replied Morton, in the tone of authority.

The voice then asked: "Can you tell me where Clarke's Brooklyn relatives can be found?"

"I cannot. I know nothing whatever of Mr. Clarke's family."

"I must find them. Clarke has committed suicide, and it is necessary to notify his friends and—"

Morton's brain blurred with the force of this blow. "You don't mean it! When did it happen?"

"About an hour ago. We must find the Lamberts, and if you can give us any information—"

"Who are you?"

"I'm a representative of *The Recorder*. Can I see you for a few minutes, Dr. Serviss?"

"I am just starting for the theatre," hurriedly answered Morton, his voice as casual as he could make it; "and I fear it is impossible."

"It is very important, Dr. Serviss, for Pratt has told me that you know the Lamberts and all about their relationship to Clarke. If you—"

"It is quite impossible," replied Morton, with decision, and hung up the receiver. For a few moments he sat in deep thought, his mind leaping from point to point of this new complication. As he analyzed the far-reaching consequences of this tragic and terrible

deed he bitterly exclaimed: "You've reached us now, Anthony Clarke! You have involved the woman you pretended to love and all her friends in a screaming sensation. Your name will be writ larger to-morrow than at any time during your whole life. You could not have hit upon a more effective revenge."

The situation grew each moment more satanic. "My name will be involved quite as prominently as hers. The mother, frantic with grief and remorse, will hate me and bitterly reproach us all. She will accuse us of causing his death. But, most important of all, what will be the effect of this news on Viola's mental condition?" His thought ran to her as he had just left her radiant with hope and new-found happiness, and it seemed as though the dead man had reached a remorseless, clutching hand to regain final dominion over her. His shadow hovered in the air above her head ready to envelop her.

"If I can only keep this from her for a few days, till my own control of her has strengthened. I *must* keep it from her. She must not see to-morrow's papers with their ghastly story." He chilled with a fuller sense of the suicide's power to torture her. "She must leave the city to-night. She will be called before the coroner, her mediumship and Clarke's control of her will be howled through the street—" He groaned with the shame and anguish of the scene his imagination bodied forth. "Pratt's hand will also be felt. He will have his own tale, his own method of evasion, and will not hesitate to dishonor her."

Furthermore, this threatening shame so far from arousing a new distrust and a desire to escape further connection with her, swept him into a profounder desire to serve and shield her. His heart filled with pity and love, and into his eyes a stern light—the light of battle—came. "She shall not be tortured so, if I can defend her or lead the way to escape. Lambert must leave the city at once and take them both with him."

He rose and walked about the room in order to recover command of his face and voice. "Truly the miserable fanatic has wrought well. He has promised himself that his spirit, freed from the body, will be able to possess and control his victim. The mother will understand and accept this. Will Viola?" The thought of her, dominated by this new and revolting delusion, filled him with dismay and horror. "She, too, will be smitten with remorse, and the scale may be turned against me and my influence." This was indeed the most disturbing consideration of all.

Realizing at length that every additional minute of absence made his explanation more difficult, he returned to his guests with impassive face and resolute determination to control his thought even from Viola's mind-reading power.

Kate saw at once that some dark thing shadowed him. "What is it, Morton?"

"One of my acquaintances has met with trouble—financial trouble—and wants my help. I'll tell you about it later," he curtly replied, attacking the salad again. She was silenced though not satisfied, and

dinner was resumed in almost painful silence and in general depression.

Viola was especially troubled by the change in Morton's face, and with a desire to be of some comfort to him softly said: "Perhaps you would rather not go to the theatre to-night. Please don't do so on our account."

Her glance and her tone, both more intimately sympathetic than she had hitherto permitted them to be, touched him deeply, and with an effect of throwing off his gloom he cheerily responded: "We will not let any outside matter interfere with our happiness. There is nothing to be gained by staying at home. Please forget all about this interruption."

As he spoke she sat with hands before her, gazing straight at him with eyes that slowly lost their outward look. Her eyelids fell, she began to whiten and to droop, and her hands twitched and trembled.

Seized for an instant with an unreasoning fear—a belief that she had been able, after all, to penetrate his mind and read its dreadful secret, Morton sat irresolute, in the grasp of a blind despair, a palsy of the will. Clarke's dead hand seemed at the instant more powerful than the living man had been. This stupefaction lasted but a single second, for back to the young scientist's heart, like a swelling wave, came the red blood of his anger, his love, his mastering will. Rising swiftly but calmly, he caught her hands in his saying, gently: "You are forgetting your promise to me. Look at me. I want to see if you are really going to disobey my commands."

She slowly raised her face to him, but only faintly responded to his voice. "I cannot permit this," he went on. "You have left this behind you. I will not permit you to give way. It is a kind of treason to me—your physician. For my sake you must put this weakness aside and assert your real self." He spoke gently, tenderly, as the lover, rather than as the man of science, and the mysterious power of his hand, the passionate pity of his eyes restored her to self-mastery, and she murmured:

"Please forgive me. I didn't mean to do this."

"I know that. But you must not invite your trouble. You laid your hands upon the table. You must not do that. I'll order you to eat off the mantelpiece, if you do that again," he added, with intent to make her smile.

Mrs. Lambert, who had risen to go to Viola's relief, sank back into her seat with a sense of being forgotten at a time when she should have been her daughter's first thought. She was no longer necessary. Her place had been taken by another, a man and a stranger, hostile to her faith, and with this knowledge her heart grew cold and bitter with defeat and despair, the anguish and the neglect which are to be forevermore the darker side of the mother's glory had come to her at last with cruel force.

The entire attack lasted but a few minutes, but it served to bring Viola nearer to her lover than all the hours of their more formal intercourse, though the full revelation of his true relationship was yet to come.

She loved and trusted him, but as her friend, her defender. She rose at last to demonstrate that she was entirely herself again. "I am ashamed of myself," she said, humbly. "Please don't look so concerned." She turned to Kate. "I assure you it was only a little faintness. You see I didn't sleep very well last night."

"Let's not try to go out," interposed Kate. "You're tired."

"Oh no; please, *please* don't let me spoil the evening. I will never forgive myself. Truly I want to go."

Morton's glance instructed Kate, and she said: "Very well. We will go dress while the men finish their coffee. Come, Mrs. Lambert."

Mrs. Lambert rose silently and the three women left the room together with an effect of haste.

No sooner were they out of the room than Morton turned to his guest with most serious look and tone. "Come to my study, Mr. Lambert, I want a few very private words with you."

The miner followed his host with mild wonder expressed on his face, and as the door closed behind them and they were secure of being overheard, he remarked, with a chuckle: "You headed off old Daddy McLeod out there. First it was Clarke and then Daddy. I thought he had her this time."

Morton ignored this remark and, with most decisive utterance, said: "You must take your wife and daughter out of town by the very next train. Clarke has killed himself, and Viola will be the centre of a

flaming sensation to-morrow morning. She must be taken away to-night."

Lambert remained standing, perfectly rigid, for a few moments then slowly seated himself. "Was that your trouble over the 'phone?"

"Yes."

"Who told you?"

"A reporter 'phoning from Pratt's house apparently."

"When did it happen?"

"He said an hour ago. That may mean more or less— A fiend could not have planned a more inclusive revenge. We will all be involved in it. If he died by poison we may even be accused of killing him. They are already in pursuit of you, and the police may arrive at any moment. At the least we will all be summoned before the coroner." He paused a moment. "But that isn't all. I fear the effect of this news on Viola's mind."

Lambert's eyes lost their keen glitter, and his facial muscles fell slack. He spoke in a low voice weighted with deepest conviction. "*He will manifest.*" Then, as a light came into his eyes, he exclaimed: "He was trying to control her just now!"

Morton ignored this remark. "If we can keep this news from her for a few days, I defy any of her so-called 'controls' to affect her."

Lambert stirred uneasily in his chair. "I don't know about that. Clarke had a strong hold on her."

"He is dead. He has done his worst," responded

Morton. "I tell you, it is your business to get as far from the city to-night as you can and keep ahead of the news if possible."

"That won't do any good. She is clairvoyant. She'll know of it."

"She didn't know you were coming to-day, did she?"

"No."

"And she has no knowledge yet of Clarke's death. Her attack at the table may have been, as she says, only a feeling of faintness. Besides, he's been dead two hours, and these manifestations always take place at the exact moment of death, do they not?"

Lambert brightened. "That's so! But I'm scared of what 'll happen if he *should* manifest."

"Be assured. He can no more 'manifest,' as you call it, than a dead dog. Keep the newspapers from your wife and daughter, and it will be a long time before they learn of his death through any occult channel. I stake my reputation on that."

"I wish I felt as certain of that as you do," the miner answered. "I've seen so many impossible things happen. I'm kind o' shaky. I wish I could have your help." He rose with a shiver of dread. "You're right. I see that. We've got to get out of here, but it won't do to go back home."

"Take ship and go abroad."

"I can't do that. I can't leave my business so long." He paced up and down. "Suppose I had a telegram to meet a man in Montreal—a mining man."

"A good idea!" exclaimed Morton. "You could cross the border before the news could overtake you. The Canadian papers will make little of the suicide. But will your people go?"

"They'll have to go," replied Lambert, firmly. "Leave that to me." He took a telegram from among several old ones in his pocket. "I've just received this, you understand?"

Kate knocked, and called: "We're all ready, Morton?"

He opened the door. "Come in, Kate, I want to talk with you. I'm afraid our theatre-party is off. Mr. Lambert has received a very important message which may take him out of town."

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" cried Kate. "Can't you wait till to-morrow?"

"I'm afraid not," replied Lambert. "Looks like I'd have to go to-night, and I want the girls to go along with me." And so saying, with the telegram open in his hand, he went out into the sitting-room where Viola and her mother were standing dressed for the carriage. "Girls," he called, persuasively. "Don't you want to go to Montreal?"

"When?" inquired Viola.

"To-night."

"Oh, not to-night! We want to go to the theatre. Wait till to-morrow."

Kate was about to join in this protest when Morton drew her into his study and shut the door. "Don't stop them!" he said, almost fiercely. "They must go."

"Do you mean to escape Clarke?"

"Yes, Clarke, or rather his ghost."

"His ghost! What do you mean?" she asked, with startled eyes.

"He has killed himself—hush, now! they must not know it, and they must flee. Don't you see that this may undo all my plans for the girl's redemption and may enslave her more deeply than ever? The papers will be full of Clarke to-morrow morning. Pratt's wealth, my connection with an institution, insures a tremendous scare-head. The mother will be conscious-wrung, and the whole weight of the infernal tragedy will crush down on Viola. The only possible respite for her is to cross the border into Canada, outrun the newsmongers, and trust in time to heal her mental derangements."

Kate's eyes expanded with the same fear that filled Lambert. "You don't suppose he will be able to haunt her? Was that what happened at the table?"

"No, not in the sense you mean. He is dead, and I have no fear of his ghost, but the memory of him will torture her soul; and if she *believes* that he is able to come to her, the belief will be almost as tragic as the fact."

"Morton, it is a test!" she exclaimed, with breathless solemnity. "If there is any truth in spiritualism, he will manifest himself to her and you cannot prevent it."

"I know it is a test and I welcome it! I stake all that I am on the issue. She was at her merriest

when he was dying. She has no hint of his deed at this moment, and with all her clairvoyance I am perfectly certain she will not be able to read what is in our minds if you can restrain your tongue. If you can't do that, I beg of you to stay in your room." He was harsh and curt in his tone; and she shrank from him. "Her mental health, her sanity, may be in peril."

"I can keep silence," she replied, "But, oh, Morton, think of that poor girl—up there in some bleak hotel in Canada, with only these two old people! Suppose *he does* come to her there, what can they do? Wouldn't it be better to keep her here—let her learn it here—where you can help her?"

"And be haled before the coroner, to be charged perhaps with poisoning Clarke, or some other equally monstrous thing? No, I have been all over the ground, and I tell you there is no other way. She must go to-night. The police may arrive at any moment."

'Then you must go with her," she retorted, with a decision almost equal to his own. "She needs you."

"No, no. I can't do that," he replied, impatiently, almost angrily. "I would be accused of abducting her. It is utterly out of the question."

Kate, knowing that she was asking a good deal, went resolutely on: "She has no one but you to lean upon. She trusts you, and she ought to have some strong, sane person on whom to rely. I would be worse than useless up there. I am scared out of my wits at thought of Clarke's possible revenge upon *her!*

Besides, by going with her you will escape some of the notoriety about to thrust upon you."

He was plainly vacillating. "Think of the fat news-items my flight will add to the stew."

Kate shuddered. "Oh, I know! I hope you don't blame me.— It's true, I *am* to blame. I *did* insist on your going to see her." She was beginning to suffer with this thought, when he put out his hand and drew her to him with affectionate wish to comfort her.

"Don't assume that worry, Kit. She profoundly interested me from the first, and I do not regret my acquaintance with her—even at this moment. I believe she is essentially untouched by this business and that she can be cleansed of all Clarke's influence. His death removes her worst enemy; and if I can persuade her parents to leave her with us, I am perfectly certain I can root out the deepest of her delusions."

"Then go," she said, in final surrender. "Conventions ought not to count against saving a sweet, good girl. Go and help her, and if you bring her back here, I'll receive her gladly."

Morton opened the door, and while Kate went to Viola he said: "Mr. Lambert, if you will add me to your party, I will be glad to go with you."

Lambert seized his host's hand and wrung it hard. "My boy, you save my life! I thought of asking you, but I couldn't find the nerve. We'll all need you—the girl worst of all." Tears were in his eyes as he added, huskily: "Yes, we need you."

Viola, with shining face, came running towards

them. "Oh, Professor Serviss! Is it true? Are you going?"

"Yes, if you will let me."

"Let you! Oh, you don't know what it means to have you with us."

He looked down upon her with a smile whose full message she could not read, but it expressed something very tender and disconcerting. "You can't know what it means to me to go. You see, I daren't quite trust you alone with these indulgent parents and as your physician it is my duty to see that my prescriptions are fully carried out."

During the bustle of preparation for the journey, he found opportunity to reassure Kate: "Thus far, she has no inkling of what is in our minds." He closed his fist as if shaking it in the face of an implacable foe, and, through his set teeth, added: "I accept the challenge! I welcome you and all your dark band to the utterance!"

Kate turned pale. "Don't say that!" she whispered. "It's like tempting Providence."

"I fear neither Providence nor demons; but I am afraid of you. Keep away from Viola as much as you can. If there is any truth in mind-reading she is likelier to divine your thought than mine."

Kate's eyes suddenly grew dim. "Morton, I brought this on you, and I'm beginning to doubt. I don't believe I want you to go with her, after all." She put her hands on his shoulders and gave way to a feeling of loss and loneliness. "I've always hoped—I've

always looked forward to your having a splendid, dignified wife; and though I like her, I don't believe—she's up to you."

"Now, don't trouble about that, sis. The important thing to me is, am I worthy of her? She entered my heart the first time I saw her, and has never left it. She came at a time when I was certain no woman would ever move me again. I am indebted to her—now, that's the truth. And so"—he stooped and kissed her—"if she decides to come to me, I shall feel grateful to you. If she decides not to come—you can be grateful to her!"

XXII

THE SPIRITUAL RESCUE

WITH a conviction that he was entering upon a new order in his life, Morton Serviss opened the door of the coach for Viola and her mother. Never before had he evaded a contest, or asked for consideration from authority, and deceit had been quite foreign to him; but now, after a deceptive word to the hall-boy, he was conscious of furtively scanning the people approaching on the walk, aware of his weakness and his doubt, for no man of regular and candid life can become a fugitive with entire belief in the righteousness of his flight. He must perforce of conscience look back for a moment.

Once within the carriage he put all question aside and joined Lambert in his attempt to keep from the women the slightest suspicion that his sudden departure involved any serious change in their fortunes. The miner had taken his place beside his wife, thus bringing the young people side by side on the forward seat, and this arrangement had much to do with filling Morton's mind with a new and delicious content, for Viola's face was almost constantly lifted to his, and at every lurch of the vehicle her soft shoulder touched

his arm, while the faint perfume of her garments rose like some enchanter's incense, dulling his sense of duties abandoned, quickening his delight in her beauty, and restoring his joy in his own youth. What did the judgment of the world matter at such a time?

He said little on the ride, just enough to hold the conversation to subjects far removed from the causes of their retreat. He was convinced of Viola's ability to read (in a vague way) what lay in his thought, but he also believed in his power to prevent this by a positive and aggressive attitude of mind. Beneath his silences, as beneath his words, ran an undercurrent of suggestion from his subliminal self to hers. Lambert rose nobly to his duty and directed the conversation to the mine and its increasing generosity of output, and to news of the men and their families in whom Viola took deep interest. In the midst of this most wholesome recollection they ended their drive.

At the station Morton remained on guard with the women, while Lambert attended to the trunks and boxes, and at the earliest moment, with care not to betray haste, they passed through the gates and into their car, but no feeling of relief came to either of the men till the train began to move. Then Lambert, with a profound sigh, exclaimed: "Well, now we're off and we've got the trunks, so let's be happy."

Mrs. Lambert alone remained sad and distraught, and her husband soon drew her away to their own seat, leaving the young people together, a deed for which Morton silently, but none the less fervently,

thanked him, affording as it did the chance for his long-desired personal explanation.

The car was sparsely occupied and the section opposite was quite empty, and, with a sense of being quite alone with Viola, he lightly began: "I feel like a truant school-boy, and I'm wondering what Weissmann will say to-morrow morning when his 'first-assistant' fails to appear."

"I hope you are not neglecting your work for—for us," she said, losing a little of her brightness.

"Nothing will suffer. I do not profess to be the main prop of our laboratory, and, besides, I don't care. I'm off for a holiday, whether or no." At the word "holiday" Clarke's grisly shadow rose between them and would not down. To the suicide his holiday was due.

Viola again seemed to dimly divine his thought, for she hesitatingly said: "I am troubled about Mr. Clarke. I must write him a letter and tell him that I don't hate him now. I really begin to feel sorry for him, and I wish I hadn't been so hard."

"You have nothing to reproach yourself for, and you would better let him pass entirely out of your life, and be glad the wrench is over," he decisively replied.

She sighed and shivered a little. "He knew we were deserting him. His look haunts me. I wish I had stopped to say good-bye. He will be very lonely without us."

"He is too fanatic to win my sympathy, and he has forfeited yours."

"But he was sincere, professor. He really wanted to make the world happier."

He was resolute to keep her mind clear of all thought of Clarke, and imperiously said: "Don't call me professor, and let's talk of other and pleasanter things than Clarke. We are well out of his shadow-world, and you are never to re-enter it. I want you to forget that you ever sat in a 'circle' or heard a 'voice.'"

"Oh, I can't expect to pass entirely out of that," she exclaimed, as though the possibility came near her for the first time. "On mother's account I must continue to sit now and then. She couldn't live without her communion with papa and Waltie."

This brought him face to face with his opportunity, and he seized it manfully. "Your saying that, gives me opportunity for saying something which has been taking shape in my mind since last night. I do not pretend to fully understand the basis of your mother's faith, and I do not blame her, but I am filled with indignation that you should be called upon to suffer bondage to the dead. I rebel against it." His voice was tense with feeling. "And I will not have it so. I lunched to-day with Dr. Tolman, of whom you've heard me speak, and after describing your case to him—without using your name, of course—I asked his opinion. In reply he gave me every encouragement. The fact that you are young and in good physical health, he said, makes it possible for you to become as normal as any other girl."

"Do you believe that, Dr. Serviss?"

"I am perfectly certain of it, if you will meet my conditions. I am confident of my power to free you from your trances and all their phenomena, but you must, at once and for all time, break every tie that binds you to your 'controls.'"

"I'm afraid they will not consent."

"You must not say such a thing, much less think it," he sharply interrupted. "Your soul, your mind, should be sovereign. You should look rather to science for guidance"—here he smiled meaningly—"and to me, of course, as a representative of science. If you acknowledge the authority of the dead, or even that of your mother, my power is to that extent curtailed. It is to be in effect a war of light and darkness, science and superstition. We are willing to join issue with your shadow foes, provided your best self is with us in the struggle. I engage myself to free you if you will permit me to act."

She leaned towards him with pale face and limpid, heavenly eyes. "You have been good to me, but I cannot ask you to fight my battles. You have so much else to do in the world."

"I have nothing better to do," he responded, with a lover's glance. "Nothing can interest me so profoundly; nothing will give me greater pleasure."

She went on, fervently: "I can't tell you how you comfort me. When you are near me I have no fear of anything; but you oughtn't to give up your work to treat me. We can never pay you for what you've already done for us."

"Don't try, and pray don't exaggerate my sacrifices. You must remember I am an investigator, and you—are a most absorbing problem." She drew away from him slightly, and he returned to a more serious tone. "The influence of mind over mind is the present, or at least the coming, problem, and you have opened a new world to me. The question of your future, your cure, absorbs me, and while I am by no means a rich man, as money runs these days, I am quite able to follow out any line of investigation which may interest me."

Her face clouded. "I wish I didn't have to be investigated."

"So do I, and that brings up something which I must say, even at the risk of seeming hard and cruel. If you wish to live your full, free life, you must cut yourself off from *all* of your old associations. Clarke and Pratt have passed out of your life, but your mother—" He paused abruptly. When he resumed his tone was almost pleading: "You have said that you trusted me, that you wished for my help. Did you mean it?"

"I did, indeed I did!"

"Very well, then," he went on, "I will speak my mind. I must be very candid, even if I seem harsh. When I say you must cut yourself off from all the associations of the past, I mean your mother also."

She started up in dismay, understanding his full meaning at last. "Oh no, not that!"

"Yes, just that, and finally that. She is your

mother, and you love her; but you are a human soul as well as she, with a right to healthy, normal life. It is contrary to the law of progress to sacrifice the young to the old. Your mother's comfort has been your undoing, and I cannot for an instant agree to your submission of this question to her. You must assert your right to yourself, and she must surrender her authority to me, and she must leave you for a time. I would say this even if my own mother spoke to me through you. Your struggles tear my heart, and your mother's presence only prolongs your sufferings."

"You must not blame her," she loyally insisted. "I am to blame. My guides tell me that if I would surrender myself completely to them I would find peace," she ended, slowly, sadly, as if in confession.

"Peace! Yes, the peace of the epileptic or the mad. No, no, joy and health do not lie that way. If I were the scientist merely, I would say, 'Keep on, and I will stand by to observe your struggles.' But I am not. I am something else than scientist. It angers and agonizes me to see you tortured. I cannot endure it and I will not. In order that I may do all that I hope for, you must give yourself wholly into my care." He was speaking now in a low and throbbing voice, oblivious of time and space. "I must be something more than physician or friend. I have been saying 'must' to you, but I am, after all, a very strange autocrat. My power is dependent on you." Then, in answer to her questioning eyes, he hurried

on: "I love you, dear girl, and if you find you can trust yourself to me, fully, in this way, then I am sure of victory. Can you say this? I hope you can, for then I will have the most powerful magician in all the world fighting on my side. Are you able to do this? Can you say you love me and that you will come to me, trusting in me as in a husband?"

No one was astir in the car but the porter, but had it been filled with clamoring tongues and seeking, impertinent eyes, she would have been conscious only of his tender glance, his earnest voice, and the momentous question being pressed upon her. She struggled to speak, but could not, and he hastened on: "I will be honest with you. Your mother does not trust me. She knows and resents my feeling towards you. She knows also that I consider her separation from you necessary, for a time, and is hurt and saddened by it; but she will come to see the necessity of this measure. I do not ask an immediate answer—though I wish your heart were mine this minute—but I do want you to know that from the first moment I saw you your life has been a part of mine. I could not forget you, though I tried to do so, and I will not now give you up."

She still sat like an exquisite statue of meditation, looking out into the night, benumbed and breathless with the passion his words evoked. Suddenly she turned and vehemently exclaimed: "You ought not to ask me this. I'm not fit to be your wife."

"Let me be the judge of that."



"'YOU NEED NOT SPEAK—JUST PUT YOUR HAND IN MINE AND I WILL UNDERSTAND'"

"But you don't realize what I am. You must not think of me in that way. I can't let you. I *am* different from other women. You must not deceive yourself."

"I do not. I know, to my joy, that you are different from other girls; that is why I am here and asking you to be my wife. That is why I loved you that day on the mountain-side, because you were different."

"No, no!" she despairingly exclaimed. "You don't understand. I mean that I *am* surrounded by spirits, and they will make you ashamed of me. Think what your friends would say?"

"I am not responsible to my friends. I don't care what they say. They are not choosing my wife for me. I *do* know what you mean, and your protest increases my love for you. I am not concerned with your ghosts—only with your character."

"But I am a *medium!*" she went on, desperately. "I have this awful power. You're all wrong about mother and Mr. Clarke. They have nothing to do with what happens." Her beautiful hands were clinched and her face set in the resolution to force her confession upon him. Her bosom rose and fell piteously as she struggled for words. "You must not misunderstand me. I believe in the spirit-world. Sometimes I say I don't, but I do."

He spoke soothingly: "There is nothing wrong or disgraceful in your theory; it is your practice of trance, of mediumship, to which I object, and which I intend to prevent."

"I want you to do that. I hate my trances and those public circles. But will that put an end to the rappings and other things that go on around me when I am awake? That is the question."

This was the question, but he rode sturdily over it, resolute to subordinate it if not to trample it under foot.

"Not at all. The real question is very simple: can you trust yourself to me, fully, because you love me? If you do I will answer for the rest. I do not know why you meant so much to me that day. I do not know why, out of all the women I know, you move me most profoundly; but so it is and I am glad to have it so." He said this with a grave tenderness which moved her like a phrase from some great symphony, and as she raised her tear-stained, timid face to his she saw him as he seemed at that first meeting on the mountain-side, in the sunset glow, so manly, so frank, so full of power that he conquered her with a glance, and with that vision she knew her heart. Her eyes fell, her throat thickened, and her bosom throbbed with a strange yearning. She loved, but the way of confession was hard.

Understanding her emotion, and mindful of the place in which they sat, he softly said: "You need not speak—just put your hand in mine and I will understand."

Her hand, like some shy sentient thing, first drew away, fell hesitant, then leaped to his and nestled in his palm. He had planned to be very restrained and

very circumspect, but the touch of her trembling fingers moved him out of his predetermined self-possession, and, careless of all the surroundings, he stooped and kissed her, then exultantly, warningly said: "Remember, I am now your chief 'control,' and there are to be no other 'guides' but me."

With those words, all fear, all question, all care (save that vague distrust which the maiden feels when yielding herself to the first caress of the lover) dropped from her. The powers, the hallucinations, which had separated her from the world of womankind were forgotten, lost in the glow of her confidence and love.

THE END